

Iuliia Gataulina

Translating Gender Equality:

Nordic Initiatives in the Russian Context

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The Nordic countries are known for their gender equality agenda and policies. There have been different processes of collaboration on this issue conducted between the Nordic countries and Russia. In today's globalized world, the processes of learning from other countries' experiences and transferring best practices in order to solve problems have become more common. However, the concept of universality of provided policy models have been criticized by various researchers since contexts play a great role in adaptation of transferring policies on the ground. Due to the fact that Nordic countries and Russia represent different political, social, and cultural contexts, *domestication* of the gender equality agenda occurs. Thus, this research, using the postcolonial critique on universality and Alasuutari's concept of domestication, examines how this domestication of the Nordic gender equality norms takes place in the Russian context.

The research, first, presents conceptual and theoretical discussion, starting from the critique of universal understanding of knowledge, and the concept of contextuality. Then, the thesis moves on to discuss the main concepts of the study: policy transfer and domestication of transnational models. This is followed by discussion on the Nordic and Russian gender orders. I have chosen two cases to analyse policy transfer and domestication of Nordic gender models in Russia: the case of collaboration between the Nordic Council of Ministers and North-West Russia and the case of the activist "Eve's Ribs" project have been studied through means of interview conduction, participant observation and searching documents, websites, etc. for primary data. Case study enables to capture a vivid and rich picture of collaborative processes and draw conclusions on domestication of equality ideas by representative actors. Moreover, as a conclusion, a comparison between two cases presenting different layers of public relations has been made.

This research found that domestication of the gender equality agenda is possible only *regionally* into current Russia. In general, the importance of local communal contexts and their peculiarities are underlined throughout the research. Moreover, the conclusion about differences in two layers of analysis has been made. Whereas the governmental officials, implementing the Nordic policies, put a big emphasis on the social and labour rights of women and indicate the importance of supporting the issues of motherhood (alike with the historical understanding of gender issues based on biological differences), the feminist activists express more solidarity among themselves sharing almost the same feminist discourse.

Key words:

International Relations, Gender Equality, Feminism, Russia, Nordic Countries, Cooperation, Domestication, Policy Transfer, Postcolonialism, Case Study

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Research

The Nordic countries have been known for their achievements in the field of gender equality. Considering their system of policies (called as state feminism), they are often recognized as role models for other societies (Buchanan and Annesley, 2007: 43 quoted in Lister, 2009: 243). In today's globalized transparent world, the process of spreading various ideas on policy making and state building seems to be common. Thus, there have been collaboration among the Nordic countries and Russia on the issue of gender equality.

However, Russia as any other political, social, and cultural context is characterized by its specific gender order and norms, which have been developing based on historical processes and policies. The huge impact on the Russian gender order has had the Soviet understanding of these issues. Even though the USSR was one of the first countries in the world to implement the policies of gender equality (Ashwin, 2000), the situation was characterized as 'emancipation from above' (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015). Moreover, men and women were dependent on the state, had their duties based on their gender; in general, the system underlined the role of biological differences between women and men in public and private spheres (Temkina and Rothkirch, 2002; Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003). After some liberalization after the dissolution of the USSR and re-emerge of the feminist discourse in Russia in 1990s (Sperling, 1999; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2005), the gender order in modern Russia represents a mixture of conservative and liberal understandings of a should-be order, but in general, is characterized by the process of 're-traditionalization' of gender roles (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015). Therefore, Russia represents a specific context; while cooperation on gender equality takes place, new ideas and initiatives lie upon the existing order.

The concept of universality of knowledge has been challenged, and such concepts as contextuality, or situatedness of knowledge, has been emphasized in poststructuralism (e.g. Agnew, 2005, 2006, 2010; Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006; Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016). The critique of a possibility to create universal codes for all the contexts has entered all fields of knowledge production. Thus, this way of perceptions has been introduced into both gender and political studies. Since 1970s, Western gender scholars and activists have been criticized for reproduction of imperialistic thinking in the field of gender equality when Western practices were seen as the best of all possible (e.g. Mohanty, 2003; Gupta, 2006; Saarinen, 2009; Reilly, 2011). Following this logic, non-

Western contexts were presented as ones on their way of development towards the Western system. Postcolonial gender scholars questioned and criticized this way of thinking.

Starting with more general analysis of critique on universality and building on the concept of situatedness of knowledge in the field of gender equality, the research comes to, and makes use of, the concepts of policy transfer and domestication as the main one. Alasuutari (2009: 67) claimed that external models of policies are never adopted without a change: while being incorporated into reality, they would differ from an original blueprint depending on the existing context and naturalized among population and officials.

Therefore, this research argues that the Nordic ideas and policies on gender equality have been domesticated in the Russian context considering the Russian gender order and existing political discourse.

1.2 Research Gap

The issues of gender equality in the Nordic countries have been considerably studied by various researchers. Since gender equality is named as one of the main hallmarks of the Nordic societies (Lister, 2009: 248), it attracts much attention from scholars. Thus, the discourses on gender equality in the Nordic countries have been studied (see e.g. Holli et al, 2005; Skjeie and Teigen, 2005; Borchorst and Siim, 2008). Moreover, since the Nordic countries have been putting under realization different political and social measures aimed at equality and declared policies of state feminism, these measures have undergone the critical observation by the scholars (see e.g. Ronnblom, 2005; Dahlerup, 2011; Niskanen, 2011; Holli and Harder, 2016). However, some problems are still recognized; another part of scholarship is dedicated to these issues (see e.g. Seierstad and Healy, 2012; Kantola, 2015; Sanandaji, 2015).

As for the Russian gender order and norms, they have also undergone research by both Russian and foreign scholars. The considerable amount of studies has been related to the Soviet gender order since it characterized by peculiarities of the socialism-building system (see e.g. Ashwin, 2000; Temkina and Rothkirch, 2002; Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003). The post-Soviet gender relations in Russia also attracted much attention by the scholars: first liberalization in 90s and then re-tradinalization of gender norms in relation to modern political and social context have been subjects to scholarship (see e.g. Sperling, 1999; Brygalina and Temkina, 2004; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2005; Ayvazova, 2007; Kondakov, 2012). Apart from studying political issues, scholars dedicate their research to the demographic situation in Russia, which constitutes the

framework of gender relations on the ground and leads to different public initiatives (see e.g. Salmenniemi, 2008; Johnson and Saarinen, 2013). Research on the Russian and the Nordic gender orders is presented in this thesis while discussing the contexts.

As for cooperation on the issue of gender equality between Russia and the Nordic countries, there is less scholarship. Some of them partly touch upon domestication of these ideas. Thus, it has been argued that even in the last years of the existence of the Soviet Union, there was an opinion that feminism was brought to the USSR to destroy the country. Feminists at that time acknowledged that they indeed communicated a lot with their Western partners; consequently, this fact led to sharing experiences and opinions. However, some of them indicated that it was not the practice of transferring ideas uncritically. There had been a domestication of ideas taking place; Russian actors of collaboration were claiming that European and American feminist ideas and perceptions “fell into prepared soil” and helped to articulate thoughts regarding the Russian context. (Kondakov, 2012: 41)

All the facts mentioned above primarily show the differences in the current development of gender equality in Russia and the Nordic countries. There is, however, collaboration between various Russian and Nordic institutions on the matter of gender equality. Gradszkova (2015) indicates the Ukrainian crisis as a key point in a process of international cooperation of Russia, arguing that nowadays there is less accord with international discourse on human rights and, particularly, on gender equality by the Russian side. Nevertheless, such cooperation still exists; Gradszkova describes mutual various initiatives of North-West Russian and Nordic institutions. The main Nordic institution she analyzes is the Nordic Council, which is the part of this research as well. She indicates that during the cooperative efforts it is the best practices which are shown, and that the Nordic countries are portrayed as experts. At the same time, another issue emerges that the Nordic colleagues often underestimate the history of gender equality policies in Russia and forget the fact that Russian population was well familiar with the gender equality notion existed in the Soviet Union. (Gradszkova, 2015).

Moreover, Saarinen (2009: 519) indicates that cooperation among feminist activists seems to be appropriate to study from the point of view of postcolonial criticism since “Western interventions in the Eastern European transitional regions have been significant”. However, she emphasizes, based on previous research of cooperative projects among Russian and Nordic activists and her own experience in such work, that participants are seen as colleagues, and both Nordic and Russian activists get new information from each other (Saarinen, 2009: 521). This fact distinguishes the cooperation between two levels: the governmental one where the Nordic countries are often

presented as experts and the level of civic society, which might be characterized by more equal relations.

Temkina and Zdravomyslova (2003) have argued that ideas of gender equality have been relied on Western theories and concepts; therefore, the dichotomy between domestic peculiarities of the Russian gender order and the universal (mostly, Western) trends has become an important subject for gender studies; though, there has been not been explicit debate on this matter. Therefore, this research could add to the debates on universality of existing perceptions of gender equality and the processes of domestication of such ideas into the specific Russian political, social, and cultural context.

1.3 Research Questions

The cooperation between the Nordic countries and Russia in the field of gender equality is analyzed with the concept of domestication. Presumably, the Nordic countries being internationally portrayed as role models for achieving success in building gender equally societies mainstream their ideas through different channels of communication; thus, such channels exist regarding their Eastern neighbour – Russia. However, considering the Russian background on gender order and the current political and social situation, while some of policies might be adopted, others are changed to some extent according to the context, and a number of such gender equality ideas might be rejected. Moreover, it might seem different how various actors in the Russian society domesticate such ideas; thus, the perception of gender equality by the governmental officials could differ from those of the civic and activist communities.

Therefore, the thesis seeks to answer how the Nordic gender equality agenda and policies are domesticated into the Russian context. In order to do so, the research answers following sub-questions:

- How different are the understanding and the perception of gender equality in Russia and Nordic countries nowadays? What are differences within these two actors among different levels of actors (government and activists)?
- How do these differences, or similarities, contribute to the process of collaboration on the agenda of gender equality between Russian and Nordic institutions?
- Which initiatives experienced by Nordic countries have been implemented into the Russian context with success? Has some adaptation been taken place? Were there some initiatives or ideas which were completely opposed?

1.4 Cases, Data and Methodological Toolkit

One part of the research design represents a case study. In order to get a rich and vivid picture of co-operative practices and analyze domestication processes, two cases have been chosen: one for the governmental level, and another for the activist level. The first case represents the cooperation programme between the Nordic Council of Ministers and North-West Russia. Within this programme, the cooperation on gender equality has been taken place. As a leading example of incorporating a gender perspective into its policies, St Petersburg has been selected: thus, there is the Committee for Social Policies, which is responsible for gender policies development. However, since some problems occurred with conducting interviews with representatives of such cooperation, official documents and websites have been analyzed. Thus, seven documents related to gender policies have been put under analysis. Apart from them, in order to get a full picture of the cooperation programme itself, two web-sites have been studied: the Nordic and the Russian web-sites for cooperation. At the former, another four documents became a subject to analysis.

The “Eve’s Ribs” project represents the case for the activist level of cooperation and further domestication. This project has been organized by mutual efforts of the Russian and Finnish feminist activists; the project has a goal to counteract gender inequality with the help of artistic practices. There are various regional¹ groups that have been participated in different stages of the project (which consists of an educational part, work by all groups at their federal subjects, the festival when groups present their activities); three of them have been chosen for the research: first, two Russian organizers of the project from St Petersburg, who at the same time are activists themselves and actively participate in the project, two Finnish organizers (one of them is a representative of an artistic group, another one exclusively played a role of an organizer), two participants of the Samara feminist group, who provide a local perspective on the Nordic practices and ideas. Therefore, four interviews with six participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” project have been conducted.

Even though the interviews were the main method for data collection, other means have been used throughout the research. Participant observation has played a substantial role for data collection. Although it did not provide with data itself, participating at the international festival as a volunteer and then visiting various meetings by the St Petersburg “Eve’s Ribs” activists helped to familiarize myself with the context of the project, select the key interviewees, and be up to date with the development of the project. Apart from that, the web-site of the “Eve’s Ribs” project and two web-

¹ In this study, the word “region” relating to the Russian context is used as a federal subject in Russia.

pages at the *vk.com* social media have been studied. Those led to five interviews given by the participant to different media.

In order to analyze collected data, content analysis has been implemented since the process of analysis implies the extraction of meanings from the texts (Herman, 2008: 152). Data was grouped according to different variables and interconnections among them based on the theoretical background. The unit of analysis represents different topics and ideas, which, in general, are reflected in a name of each chapter.

1.5 Structure of the Research

The thesis is structured as following. First, the theoretical framework is presented. It includes the discussion on the critique of the concept of universality of knowledge and on postcolonial feminist critique of the concept of contextuality. It follows by the discussion on the main theoretical tools of this research: policy transfer and domestication. Furthermore, the review of some academic research on gender orders in Russia and the Nordic countries is made: since the concept of contextuality plays a great role in this research, it is important to introduce existing gender norms and policies in studied political, social, and cultural realms. This is followed by the chapter on data and methodological toolkit. Then, the research presents analytical chapters: the case of co-operation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and North-West Russia and the “Eve’s Ribs” project between Finnish and Russian activists are studied. Finally, conclusions on the domestication of the Nordic gender equality ideas are presented.

2. QUESTIONING UNIVERSALITY, EMBRACING LOCAL: IMPLICATIONS OF POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

This chapter introduces the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. This research seeks to answer how policies and ideas of gender equality existing in the Nordic countries are domesticated, meaning adopted, in the Russian context: thus, the contextuality plays a great role in this study. The concept of universality of contexts (see e.g. Agnew, 2005, 2006, 2010; Mignolo and Tlostanova, 2006; Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016) has been challenged since the beginning of operating in the poststructuralist space of conducting the knowledge. The conclusion about denying that there is a possibility to create universal codes for all the contexts has nowadays entered all fields of knowledge production. Since there's no universal truth, the notion of the progress in its modernistic sense also seems doubtful.

This way of perceptions entered both gender and political studies. Since 1970s, Western gender scholars and activists have been highly criticized for reproduction of imperialistic thinking in the field of gender equality when Western practices were seen as the best of all possible (see e.g. Mohanty, 2003; Gupta, 2006; Saarinen, 2009; Reilly, 2011). Following this logic, non-Western contexts were presented on their way of development towards the system, which had been created in the West. Postcolonial gender scholars questioned and criticized this way of thinking. Additionally, Alasuutari (2013) claims that formats for policies cannot be universal but rather they are adopted, or domesticated, in the current context.

Therefore, this chapter discusses several issues. First, it drives some conclusions from the philosophy of knowledge and questions the notions of progress and universality in the process of knowledge production. Second, it provides some implications of postcolonial feminist studies where it is concluded that a category of a woman highly intersects with a category of culture. Finally, notions of policy transfer and domestication are presented, which are claiming that all the universal ideas, practices and policies are domesticated in the current context.

2.1 Knowledge is Situated

There were two ways of seeing the nature of knowledge. First, there was the universalistic certitude. The proponents of this theory believed everything could be fully learned through the only found 'right' theory and 'common sense'. The second approach is characterized by historical-geographical contingency and emphasized that nothing could be established as the final truth except only for the audience existing at the certain time and geographical space. The supporters of this theory also claim that we must be always prepared for some surprise when situations turn out

differently from what the conventional theory or knowledge make us to expect. It must be said that the first approach of certitude has been dominant through years and has not lost its popularity nowadays. The reason for this is the appeal of this framework towards some certainty (epistemological and political) because the world continues to provide uncertain and unpredictable situations. Positivist theories in this regard also come from the first way of thinking that stresses the simple collection of sufficient relevant facts to construct a proof'. (Agnew, 2006: 1)

It is also necessary to underline here that the second approach, the historical-geographical contingency, is not poststructuralist which would entirely deny the existence of 'the truth'. Though, it drives to experimental skepticism to some extent. Thus, the logic of contingency lies in between positivist and poststructuralist frameworks, though, as it was mentioned, having more in common with the latter. The most important thought for us here is the critique of the idea of progress'. This idea in the field of the production of knowledge means that there could be one 'truth' found which then can be 'piled up' with more relevant facts. Agnew (2006: 2) suggests that we need to rethink the whole idea of progress and suggests that progress in the framework of contingency is more about expanding critical visions.

The grounds for adoption of such framework is the thought that we live in a social world with the unstable, changing and different (historically, politically, culturally) contexts; therefore, it is not possible to produce the unified codes for all of them. Such codes are no longer local, national or international. They are constituted as a result of combination of all of them but, at the same time, cannot described as something particular. (Agnew, 2006: 3)

Nevertheless, even though scholars underline the idea that there is no one universal explanation for all the codes existing worldwide, the national thinking regarding contexts is also problematic. There is an acknowledgement of a mistake of confusing a state and a nation and of shared national values and interests. Contexts and knowledge, residing in these contexts, are far more complex and cannot be explained through the national understanding only. However, the reality shows that nowadays nationalism as politics devoted to the national cause is flourishing. Moreover, recently, the territorial bordering among states has undergone revival. (Agnew, 2010) Typically, politicians, political commentators or any other policymakers construct the actors' identifications and then often appeal to the whole nation as to the community with shared national interests (Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016: 641).

Thus, understanding that national thinking regarding knowledge and experiences is not particularly proved theoretically but, nevertheless, is practice in the world we live in, it is necessary to underline how knowledges and political practices in different countries are valued differently

according to their image at the global arena. Despite the fact that states and nations are supposed to be all equal at the world scale, the hierarchy of power among different actors in international relations can easily be traced. The modern world characterized by power inequalities between states and other actors (Agnew, 2005: 440). Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006) bring the notion of border thinking, which is seen as a result of imperial and territorial epistemology. This 'border thinking' is understood as that some nations and states are inferior, which creates the Other in international politics. Therefore, such situation can be used in the way of oppression and exploitation, on the one hand, and for the purpose of removal of differences between actors, on the other. This perspective also comes from the Foucault's understanding that knowledge and power always come together (Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016: 636). Thus, some knowledges and practices experienced by some countries have subjectively bigger epistemic ranks, which continues to shape imperial differences. For example, if we consider social science, philosophy as well as gender studies, in the global distribution of knowledge the Russian research is not considered as of the same weight as, for example, the Nordic one. This subjectivity of both knowledge and practices is often described as a consequence of globalization of culture, which is also often seen as a process of reproduction of the colonial logic.

Coming back to the border thinking, Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006: 208) emphasize that borders are not only geographical but political, cultural and epistemic. This is the very case with the border between Russia and Nordic countries, which separates them not only as actors but draws the bigger divide between East and West. Thus, the new de-colonial rhetoric emerged that proposed working the empowerment and liberation of different layers (including, gender, class and culture) instead of simple accumulation of knowledge and imperial management.

At this point, the question arises whether this approach is adequate for relations between Russia and Nordic countries and the border between them. The authors are positive about it claiming that the same mechanism of border thinking can be applied to people in similar socio-economic conditions and not necessarily involved in the colonial relations among each other in the past, but still having some dominant positions one against another. Agnew (2005) also claims that hierarchical dominance in knowledge is hugely spread in the world politics; it does not simply include the relations between imperial (or hegemonic) powers and subordinate ones. The power relations are more complex and depend on various factors. The differences between Russia and "West" are blurred and unstable because Russia has been influenced by the European thinking and shared history. However, as it has been argued, over the history, Russia has been seen by its European counterparts as a country with barbaric and awkward political system. Therefore, over the years, Russia has been in an inferior position toward its Western neighbours and, in the end,

emulated Western political practices; however, some Russian claims to superiority have been arising at different times in the history. (Neumann and Pouliot, 2011) Such characteristic of relations between Russia and “West” makes it more difficult to trace such differences in the contexts as it is easier to analyze binary polar and colonial structures which is not the case here.

At the same time, it is not enough to claim that transition of knowledge always comes with imperialistic way of thinking. Practical understanding of “situatedness” of knowledge leads to further cooperation among local, transnational and international actors to exchange experience; though, imperialistic thinking can be often traced in such cooperation as well. Nevertheless, nowadays the world experiences proliferation of networks among states, government officials, non-governmental actors for the purpose of sharing information (Agnew, 2005). This conclusion directly leads us to the notions of policy transfer and domestication but, first, the grounds of the feminist framework on universalism and contexts regarding gender relations and inequality around the world will be discussed.

2.2 Universal or Not? Perspective of Feminist Studies

It has been argued that prior to 1980s, the feminist discourse was ethnocentric and was produced in the “West” to a great degree. It is not exactly accurate to claim that all the discourses of that time were neo-imperialistic; however, there were attempts by Western feminist activists to “save” non-Western women from the “barbaric” traditions and practices of their society (Reilly, 2011: 71). Since then, much work has been done by the postcolonial researchers who brought the importance of race, culture and context to the feminist discourse. This type of thinking emerged in 1980s deepening the critique of scholarship produced before by Western, white and middle class feminists. This part of the research introduces discussions on postcolonial and transnational feminisms that have been made as a critique to dominant Western feminist discourse. However, Russia is not very different from the European thinking since it developed in high linkage with Europe over the history. Second, Russia was an empire itself and had different types of relations with the Nordic countries (both as struggles among empires and conquering territories of the region). Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to use conclusions of these scholars since in the end they are applicable to all different contexts.

Power and resistance are the central themes of postcolonial feminism. In general, this way of thinking implies the idea of various, complex, sometimes overlapping power relations which are embedded within and across historical and national contexts.

Butler (1990: 1-4) claims that for the long period of history, it was assumed in the feminist theory that there was some common identity which existed in the world and could be applied as just an identity of “women”. It was believed that this category of “women” pursued the same objectives and goals and political representation. This concept was critically challenged afterwards within the feminist discourse. Moreover, women are not seen any more as one unified category but understood in unstable terms. There have been much material and knowledge produced that questioned the unified category of women as a candidate for representation and liberation. “Women” became a troublesome term because it is lacking the possibility of multiple significations. Gender does not constitute the whole personality but it is constructed in different historical and cultural contexts and intersects with racial, class, sexual, ethnic and regional modalities. It is impossible to separate gender of a person from the political and cultural contexts where it is produced and maintained. Thus, the term “woman” had slightly begun to be deconstructed in order to take into account differences among women. (Gupta, 2006: 24)

The concepts of universal patriarchy and universal basis for feminism that assumed that there must have been some common cross-cultural identity had been hugely criticized for its failure to provide the conclusions of gender oppressions existing in the concrete cultural contexts. Thus, non-Western cultures started to claim that their history of oppression had been used by Western discourse in order to support Western notions and show inferiority and barbarism of others. As a result, the whole idea of ‘universal truths’ has been replaced by the understanding of diversity. (Gupta, 2006: 24)

Butler (1990: 4) suggests that the feminist agenda itself can be undermined by the discourse which refuses the claim for representation of differences and seeks for universality. It is seen as ironical that feminism appeared in the first place as a struggle for representation but then turned to the point when it did not provide representation within. Moreover, such global feminism introduced by the Western scholars and intended to construct the unified identity can be described as patriarchal again when it comes to relations among nations (Saarinen, 2009).

This call for representation was a reason for emergence of intersectionality within feminist thinking. Intersectionality means a practice of taking into account “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” (McCall, 2005: 1771). First, it was exactly the feminist of colour who had been critical towards universalism; however, nowadays this criticism is shared basically by all feminists. Interest in intersectionality arose from the fact that feminism failed to represent lived experiences at full scale. Scholars see categories as a misleading tool that does not allow a full representation of experience, though some generalizations about the group must be made. Intersectional analysis and using the notion of

complexity allow us to reveal social inequalities in different social formations and contexts. Therefore, the point here is to explore the nature of such differences. Moreover, intersectionality allows us not only to reveal various lived experiences by individuals but acknowledge that there is a possibility of existence of different types of feminisms (Gupta, 2006: 4).

The same conclusion is expressed by Mohanty (2003: 501, 505). She argues that analysis of inequalities must be made keeping in mind both micropolitics of cultural context and macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes. She sees the feminist solidarities across borders possible. While she agrees with the criticism of universalizing Eurocentric feminist understanding of inequalities, she also emphasizes the belief that the local can be illuminating and specifying of the universal. Differences among local contexts are never just differences; by knowing and revealing those differences, one “can better see the connections and commonalities” since border is never complete or determined. Thus, such differences help us to explain connections within boundaries more accurately and then theorize universal problems more fully.

Political shifts to the right which the world experiences today make it even more important to be attentive to micropolitics of everyday life in different cultural groups. It is also crucial to analyze local and global without coming back to colonizing and cultural relativist discourses. (Mohanty, 2003: 508)

Moreover, these discussions surely changed the rhetoric and terms of the discourse. Breny Mendoza (2002: 310) suggests to use “transnational” instead of “global” feminism. She believes that the use of the word ‘transnational’ can capture this shift in feminist thinking that was brought into reality by the postcolonial critique. Now, all the scholars who identify themselves with transnational feminisms understand the accusations that have been made towards ethnocentrism and, thus, are dedicated to principles of multiple identities. The term in use is “feminisms”; the plural form underlines the multiplicity of feminisms existing and practicing around the world. At the same time, national feminisms have an increasing tendency to politicize the feminist challenges and bring women’s issues across the borders of the nation state. This is carried out at the global arena through international movements and organizations, across borders among state actors or even in the Internet.

The concept of transnational feminisms also stresses the fact that the privileges of one category in the world system are always linked to experience of oppression or exploitation by another. This leads to the conclusion that different scale of inequalities of women is produced by their location does not always allow to talk about solidarity. Thinking and doing something in practice under the concepts of transnational feminisms require comparative work across contexts rather than

the 'relativistic' thinking of differences: the way of thinking characterizing the global feminism. Thus, the solution here is to compare and to learn from one another those overlapping displays of oppressions and inequalities, not to construct one unified hegemonic portrayal of oppression based exclusively on gender. (Gupta, 2006: 34)

There is also another side of transnational feminisms. Even though there are differences among contexts, it does not straightly lead to the fact that they all depend on the nation-state and exist only within one territory. The concept of transnational feminisms shows artificiality of a nation and its patriarchal nature. Moreover, these theoretical positions go beyond the binary divides of colonizer-colonized and oppressor-oppressed showing the complexity of power relations and inequalities in the world. The critique by the postcolonial feminists has also been made towards the idea of passive victims" of traditional and cultural oppression in non-Western countries and then towards the discourse on the mission of knowledgeable White men to rescue them. From the point of view of the transnational theoretical framework, the Western experience is also constrained by its history and the contemporary location in the world scale of culture, traditions and various experiences. Thus, the Western agency is also partial and limited. (Deepak, 2012: 785)

Thus, the comparative feminist work is agreed to be the most productive and effective while working across national boundaries by many scholars. Mohanty (2003: 503) underlines that feminists can put into practice the idea of "common difference" through this model and then work together committed to this thought which can be a basis for solidarity across unequal power relations and differences.

All of these discussions brought into reality the ongoing cross-cultural and transnational way of thinking within the feminist theories and practices. Such transnational feminisms became a political project meaning that feminist endeavors became collaborative and cross-border on purpose. Such movements include different actors, both state and intergovernmental ones. The aim of such cross-border activities is to transform discourses and contexts learning one from another. (Reilly, 2011) However, the author once again stresses the crucial fact that transition from the universal understanding of women's needs, oppression and representation is possible through recognition of intersectionality of women's identities and experiences and acknowledging that women do not constitute one common group but relate to multiple categories. In practice, some 'common' agendas and actions can be formulated only after taking into account those differences and commitment to the cross-boundary dialogue. There is a desire and, most importantly, a possibility for a political solidarity among feminists from across the globe; this process transcends race, class, sexuality and, what is crucial for this research, national boundaries (Mendoza, 2002).

Concluding on this point, unilateral global feminism intended that values and practices would be finalized in the world's developed centres and then transferred into "peripheries". Transnational feminism denies this logic and emphasizes that it is multilateral and advocates for diffusion of knowledge and institutions. Therefore, transnational feminism leaves the room for some interpretation, translation or adaptation. What is seen as problems in one part of the globe can be actually a solution for problems in the other. (Saarinen, 2009: 522) This is only one example how such adaptation may take place in real cooperation. Here is a discussion on such translation in the context of the policy transfer and domestication.

2.3 Policy Transfer and Its Domestication

Having discussed the issue of contextuality, the research introduces the concepts of policy transfer and domestication as the main theoretical tools to analyze collected data and to answer the research questions.

There has been always been something that could be defined as policy transfer. However, it was brought into reality to great extent after the Second World War with rapid growth of interconnectedness at all levels between countries (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 343). The phenomenon of the policy transfer is highly connected to another phenomenon – globalization, which has been an important and large topic both in public and scientific realms. It additionally led to appearance of the similar agenda around the globe on political and social issues. Problems experienced by each country can be described with different context; however, countries are often confronted with the same global problems (Rose, 1991). Thus, scholars paid attention to the fact that some fashions, regarding also politics and management (including ones concerned with gender equality), have been spreading across the globe among various institutions (from organizations to nation-states) (Alasuutari, 2013: 103). Authorities of different levels (policy makers in governments and cities) and other actors (for example, NGOs and activists) have an opportunity to analyze how other nations face different issues and how they respond to them.

As it was mentioned, strategic decisions and transfers of policies and ideas can be taken by actors both inside and outside the government; Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 344) "acknowledge the significance of actors outside the government machine in the process" as well. They name six main categories, which can be involved in the policy transfer process: elected officials; political parties; bureaucrats/civil servants; pressure groups; policy entrepreneurs/experts; and supra-national institutions. These facts lead to the learning process and policy transfers around the globe (Rose, 1991).

According to Dolowitz and Marsh (1996: 344), policy transfer should be defined as follows:

Policy transfer, emulation and lesson drawing all refer to a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place.

This process can be used in various ways and for various goals. There are always supporters and opponents of policies; in general, they use foreign ideas to gain their own goals in promoting specific ideas in the country of residence. In order to understand the reasons of policy transfer, scholars make a distinction between voluntary and coercive transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). The primary motivation for voluntary transfer is dissatisfaction with current situation in some area of life. Supporters of this theory presume that there is no need for policy transfer when the routine and governmental policies work properly. Only when such system stops providing ‘solutions’, there is necessity to search for lessons and policies implemented abroad. (Rose, 1991: 10)

Coercive transfer can be direct and indirect. Direct policy transfer is when one government forcibly pushes another government to implement some policies. I will not discuss this type further as it seems even on the primary stage of research that it is not the case in the development of cooperation on the matter of gender equality between Russia and Nordic countries. Indirect coercive transfer is led by interdependence between countries; it pushes governments and other actors to work together in order to solve common problems (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996: 348). Which of these types is relevant for my research will be analyzed later throughout the conducted work.

The problem here that arises regarding policy transfer is the belief in ‘progressive’ development, which has been shared by policy-makers and actors of cooperation. It means that any society would go through certain identical stages on their way to development. This theory was presented as a Darwinian evolutionary idea. According to it, the social change is determined and ‘evolve’ through time in a universal development process; therefore, this view is also described as having an a-cultural understanding of societies. (Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016: 640) This way of thinking lies on, and at the same time, requires, the arguments of the proponents of the universalistic certitude as a way of production of knowledge, which has been discussed above.

Since, as it has been mentioned, this idea remains to be commonly shared, many figures of speech naturalize such way of thinking: we talk about ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ countries placing them in the order according to their ‘development status’. Thus, the policymakers working for different actors of international cooperation often adopt the same reforms; there is a strong belief that development’ requires them to do so (Alasuutari and Qadir, 2016: 641). Moreover, it also

leads to the fact that some countries can try to force other countries to adopt some changes since they are seen as more developed in some sense. This method has undergone a huge critique. Additionally, this idea corresponds to the ideas of the global feminism when conclusions about 'normal' and 'the best' practices are drawn based on experiences of Western societies.

In order to proceed with understanding of policy transfer process, it is needed to introduce the notion of domestication, which will be the main theoretical concept of this research. Introducing the concept, Alasuutari (2009: 67) describes it that

External models are never just adopted; when turned into actual practices and incorporated with local conditions their meaning and consequences are different from the original blueprint.

Thus, the concept of domestication is based on the idea that during the transfer process, outcomes of policies are naturalized among the local government and population. As Alasuutari (2009: 68) emphasizes, it is also relevant to discuss domestication of foreign policies in the context of both nation-states and particular areas within them (municipalities, regions, cities). Domestication also means analyzing how external policies are perceived by (trans)local actors and how they become accepted, adopted, or rejected and to what extent.

As Alasuutari (2009: 69) indicates, thinking about the process of domestication, which happens around the world, may create a feeling that the world is heading to the one homogenous, however, hybrid, world culture; that nation-states and their own features are gradually disappearing. Against this conclusion, he signifies the fact of resistance to this phenomenon that is showed by some nations, for example, 'in vibrant national cultures or in local neighborhoods'.

The local consciousness in the contemporary world tends to be very persistent; as a result, nationalist and localist ways of thinking are appearing to the huge extent: nations are perceived as unique by those who share this national identity. It all results in the opposite of the globalist way of thinking conclusion: that all nations are determined by their own unique culture. According to Alasuutari (2013), these two opposite processes are the reasons for domestication.

This leads to the conclusion that different nations share similar cosmopolitan ideas because many categories in our way of thinking is translocal; at the same time, people experience their daily practices and live their lives differently around the globe. According to Meyer (2000), the uniqueness and national identity are concentrated in expressive culture; this means food, dress, and, most importantly for this research, language, traditions, and familial style.

Therefore, contexts play a very important role in the process of policy transfer and its further domestication. In the analytical parts of this research, such question as how the Russian actors

domesticate the Nordic gender equality policies and ideas in their context will be discussed. However, before getting to the methodological and analytical sections of this research, the description of the Nordic and Russian context will be presented. The definition of gender equality, however, will not be discussed at this stage of the research since, as it has been argued, contexts might vary in their meaning of gender equality.

3. PRESENTING CONTEXTS: GENDER ORDER AND RELATED POLICIES IN RUSSIA AND NORDIC COUNTRIES

The chapter analyzes the existing contexts on gender issues, first, in Nordic countries and then in Russia. The discussion on the Nordic context starts with the part on the position of the countries of the region as ones with the most elaborative measures taken in the field of gender equality (see e.g. Holli et al, 2005; Borchorst and Siim, 2008; Lister, 2009); therefore, it analyzes existing discourses from both inside and outside the region (Holli et al, 2005; Skjeie and Teigen, 2005). Next, it provides information on the most efficient political and social measures being in operation in the Nordic countries (see e.g. Ronnblom, 2005; Niskanen, 2011; Holli and Harder, 2016). Moreover, some problematic issues, which are needed to be improved, are addressed (see e.g. Lister, 2009; Niskanen, 2011; Seierstad and Healy, 2012; Kantola, 2015; Sanandaji, 2015). This part discusses exclusively the public sphere; since the research question is related to the topic how the concrete policies and ideas of gender equality of the Nordic context are domesticated into the Russian one, it seems relevant to discuss exactly those practices.

The discussion on the Russian context begins with the Soviet gender contract, which has a huge impact on the current gender norms in Russian society (see e.g. Temkina and Zdrovamyslova, 2003; Brygalina and Temkina, 2004; Salmenniemi, 2008; Kondakov, 2012; Johnson and Saarinen, 2013). Furthermore, there are some description of the situation after the dissolution of the USSR, particularly, new policies and discourses, which emerged at that time (starting with the uprise of the women's movement in 1990s and then the re-traditionalization since the beginning of 2000s (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015)). The part also provides some thoughts on the demographic situation in the current Russian society and people's approach towards gender roles. Finally, it discusses some nonetheless existing issues of gender equality in the Russian space. Therefore, in this part, both public and private levels of gender order is present: while discussing domestication, it is important for the analysis to be based both on political attitudes towards gender equality issues and private experiences of population, which such ideas would apply for in the context.

3.1 Nordic Context of Gender Equality Policies

The welfare states which were built by the Nordic countries has been described by some scholars as "the best of all possible thinkable worlds" (Kangas and Palme, 2005:2 in Lister, 2009: 242). The special mark of the welfare state is its 'passion for equality' (Holli et al, 2005; Borchorst and Siim, 2008). The Nordic practices have been acknowledged in Europe and around the globe for achievements on a very various range of indicators. One of such indicators, which Nordic countries

are famous for, is gender equality. This is reflected in different kinds of literature. For example, according to Buchanan and Annesley: “In much of the comparative literature on democracy, welfare states and state feminism, the Nordic states are held up as role models for gender equality policies” (Buchanan and Annesley, 2007: 43 quoted in Lister, 2009: 243). This welfare state model is not just used by scholars but is also ‘worn with pride’ by governments and citizens of the Nordic countries (Lister, 2009: 245). The Nordic model is committed to such values as equality, solidarity, and universalism; these all lead to the principle of equal citizenship shared by the Nordic countries.

Some scholars identify gender equality as “one of the most prominent hallmarks of the Nordic model” (Melby, Ravn and Wetterberg, 2008:4 quoted in Lister, 2009: 248). There are three discursive frames on the debates about gender equality: ideas of historical progress; gender equality as equal opportunity; an emphasis on cooperation between women and men (Holli et al, 2005: 150). The first discourse on the historical progress means that in the Nordic rhetoric gender equality is highly linked to ideas of gradual progress. The actual gap existing between the political discourse and the living reality is explained by the metaphors of travel meaning that the countries slowly and steadily move towards equal societies and that such equality is preordained by historical progress. Moreover, the discourse on profitability of gender equality is added. However, there is one problem concerning such idea of progress: it requires almost eternal patience. As gender equality is presented as a normative goal “in the end” of the “journey” (Skjeie and Teigen, 2005), it is sometimes removed from the urgent agenda leaving space for solving other 'up-to-date' problems (Holli et al, 2005).

Talking about political representation, it is important to claim that there are no gender quotas in the national politics; nevertheless, such gender quotas are used by many political parties which operate in the Nordic countries. The drive for implementation of quotas began in 1990s, which were seen as a considerable women’s victory (Holli et al, 2005: 150). Speaking of parliamentary politics, the representation of women is relatively good and composes about 37-43 %. Equal balanced representation in the national parliament is considered at 40-60 % of distribution of seats between men and women. This criterion is met in Finland, Sweden and Iceland; Norway and Denmark are just below the figure of 40 % of women in the parliaments. The representation has been growing since the mid-1990s. The same situation of the gender balance can be seen in the parliamentary committees and governments. At the same time, the figures in municipal politics are smaller: from 27 % to 40 %. In general, the level of municipal politics is characterized by stagnation. (Niskanen, 2011: 29)

Nonetheless, one of the most important factors is those areas which men and women work on in the parliaments. First, it should be mentioned that a lot of work is done through parliamentary committees. Thus, only in Sweden there is no one gender dominated area of work. In the other countries, the committees responsible for economy, defence, finance, transport are distinctly male dominated. Women, as a rule, are more represented in the committees with social-cultural functions.

The same problems with vertical and horizontal segregation can be seen in the governments either. There is an interplay between segregation and party and national politics. The greater representation of women in national politics is highly linked to their positions in the political parties. (Niskanen, 2011)

There are, though, several explanatory approaches why there are still considerable problems with gender representation in Nordic countries. The first one is structural explanations meaning that there has been 'a glass ceiling' for women in politics, which tends to reproduce through various mechanisms. The second approach is a time-lag theory which is based on social sciences development theories. It also corresponds to the use of travel metaphors as it was mentioned above. Although this theory has some validity, it does not explain the current stagnation and the great increase in figures of representation in 1970s. The third approach is the saturation theory which indicates that the representation of 30 % is perceived as satisfactory and makes the voices heard. The fourth approach consists of actor-focused explanations meaning that socio-political debates, coverage of gender equality issues, and pressure from the women's movements have been crucial for the development of gender equality in the Nordic countries. (Niskanen, 2011).

There are several types of measures taken by Nordic countries in regard to political gender equality. The first type of measures concerns the provisions in gender equality legislations: gender-balanced representation has been prescribed for public committees, commissions, and boards appointed by governments in all Nordic countries since 1980s. The second measure is the voluntary gender quotas in political parties. It is important to notice since political parties play a substantial role in political representation: they nominate candidates for elections (Dahlerup, 2009 quoted in Niskanen, 2011: 35). However, it is not exactly possible to draw clear conclusions about correlation between party quotas and political representation; although, the most important effect is at the discursive level. (Niskanen, 2011).

The important tool for spreading the idea and practices of gender equality is gender mainstreaming. It means that there is a goal reinforced with actual strategies to integrate a gender perspective in all public policies. Discussions of the fruitfulness of gender mainstreaming, which

appeared in the feminist research, come to two different conclusions. First, such a strategy seems useful since it provides a profound structural change. However, on the other hand, some see difficulties of implementing gender mainstreaming as society is embedded with power dimensions, of which gender is one of them. (Ronnblom, 2005: 164).

Moreover, there is a practice of the standing parliamentary committees on gender equality in the Nordic countries. They are perceived as “potential mediators between women’s movement demands and the state”. The results of studies show that, under some circumstances, such committees can effectively insert gendered issues into legislation. (Holli and Harder, 2016: 796)

Another reason for this level of success in pursuing gender equality is that the pressure from various women’s movements has led to their bigger representation in the public sphere; that was both “from autonomous women’s movements and from women within trade unions, and from women’s organizations and groups within political parties” (Dahlerup, 2011: 81).

However, scholars also indicate several problems connected to the issue of gender equality in these countries. First, there are concerns that gender equality begins to be taken “for granted”, and this agenda gradually shifts from the central political goal (Lister, 2009: 248). Additionally, it must be noticed that even though the Nordic countries have achieved some significant results comparing to other parts of the world, such problems as labour market segregation, unequal gender participation in decision-making, etc. still exist. In other fields besides political representation the Nordic countries are not a leading region in the world’s scale. Power studies and statistics indicate that there is no equal distribution among women and men at the different top-level positions. Women and men have different types of public power. Recruitment political channels plays an important role in women’s representation in public offices and institutions. It can be explained by the political equality measures. Men, in turn, occupy a bigger number of top positions where a recruitment process is proceeded through appointment (Niskanen, 2011). Therefore, the business sector (Sanandaji, 2015) and academia (Seierstad and Healy, 2012; Kantola, 2015) are still male dominated. In order to change institutions’ structures, Finland, for example, has developed and adopted a specific policy according to which organizations have to perform their activities regarding the values of gender equality (Brunila, 2009; Kantola et al, 2012 quoted in Kantola, 2015: 84). The Finnish Equality Act from 2005 obliges those workplaces, which have more than 30 employees, to work according a prepared gender equality plan (Kantola, 2015: 84).

Turning from the issues of representation to everyday life experiences, it must be said that one of the problems remains gendered domestic violence. Notably, the problem has been raised while discussing transnational marriages between Nordic citizens and spouses from non-Western

countries. Sometimes, the issue of gender equality plays the role of a distinguisher and a marker of differences between ‘gender-equal Nordics’ and ‘patriarchal immigrants’. However, the problems of domestic violence are still highly existed in the Nordic societies. Sweden, Denmark, and Norway have been debating these issues for several decades; Finland is relatively a latecomer (discussions on gendered violence and multiculturalism began in 1990s). (Keskinen, 2011)

Thus, the rise of the critical discourse towards existing gender equality started around mid-1990s. As a rhetoric, gender equality is always present at the political discourse. Nevertheless, the things start to change when analyzing the behavioral norms. Such a gap between the rhetoric and practice is one of the existing problems in Nordic countries and one of the major topics for research there. Thus, scholars claim that the Nordic gender equality is often made and constructed through the political and public discourse, which can be sometimes filled with different meaning depending on a context. (Holli et al, 2005)

Therefore, the degree of progress made by Nordic countries is different from perceptions of various scholars, politicians, and citizens. There is no denying that some progress has been made; at the same time, there are still problems existing. Lister (2009) proposes a concept to evaluate achievements in gender equality in these countries by sticking to one of ideas whether the glass is “half-full” or “half-empty”. That is how the situation in Nordic countries is seen from different perspectives.

3.2 Russian Context: Emancipation in the Past and Modern Neotraditional Gender Ideology

Having described briefly the development of gender equality issues in Nordic countries, it is the turn of the Russian context. In order to understand gender order existing in Russia nowadays, it is necessary to look at the past of the country, particularly, at the history of gender equality policies in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet state was one of the first in the world to implement the policy of gender equality. Revision of the gender order was one of the essential goals for building new communist society in the opinions of the Bolshevik Party. The new political agenda included liberation of women (Ashwin, 2000). Thus, it characterized the situation in the country as ‘emancipation from above’ (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015: 91). Although, it is highly arguable among scholars whether the motives of the party were more emancipatory or instrumental, there is no denying that such policies nonetheless existed. As a result, the 1918 Code of Laws brought into reality many new phenomena. Among all other things, women gained political rights. Moreover, divorces were

permitted; women were allowed to retain full control over their property and earnings after marriage. The party was liberating women from dependence on patriarchal families; at the same time, the patriarchal state was being built. Women and men were not dependent on each other but on the state (Ashwin, 2000; Temkina and Rothkirch, 2002).

Other important Bolshevik implications for women concerned work and motherhood. Women participation in a labour market was also integral to emancipation of women from traditional gender roles, which were dominated before. Women received an obligatory right to work. As Kollontai claimed (quoted in Ashwin, 2000: 14),

The women in Communist society no longer depends upon her husband, but on her work. It is not in her husband, but in her capacity for work that she will find support. She need have no anxiety about her children. The workers' state will assume responsibility for them.

The Party officially declared the resolution of the “women’s question” and claimed establishment of the equal rights for women and men (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003: 53). Nonetheless, there were some problems with the implications.

First, men were not encouraged to participate in running a household. Although men and women were doing the same amount of work outside at their workplaces, only women were supposed to be responsible for taking care of children, shopping, cleaning and other things related to household.

This phenomenon is known as a women’s “double burden”. Second, there was another contradiction in the Bolshevik gender policies towards women. Although it was a politics of social transformations, it revealed and fixed “natural” division of power in a labour market characterized by biological differences between men and women. Women’s work was associated with such feminine work fields as childcare, healthcare, education, social affairs. This division in power and a labour market had been existing throughout the whole time of existence of the Soviet state (Ashwin, 2000; Temkina and Rothkirch, 2002).

Having looked at some historical features of the Soviet state, which could be seen as fundamental in understanding a current situation in Russia, the modern development around gender representations and practices in Russia will be addressed.

Social inequalities, which had existed in the USSR, became vivid for the society after the fall of the Soviet system. These inequalities represented “occupational discrimination, disposition of women from decision-making processes and institutions, formation of specifically feminine less paid jobs” (Voronina 1993: 208 quoted in Kondakov, 2012: 37), “practice of double day work,

patriarchal family structures, women's economical dependency on men" (Rotkirch and Temkina 2007: 173-174 quoted in Kondakov, 2012: 37).

Nevertheless, the dissolution of the Soviet Union had led to both continuities and breaks in gender relations. On the one hand, the state had lost its primary role in determining the gendered citizenship. The gender order in post-soviet Russia is a consequence of different social forces: politicians, the media, the labour market, the church, educational institutions, and feminist initiatives (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2005). Thus, feminism emerged again as a discourse and a form of collective action at the beginning of the 1990s (Sperling, 1999; Brygalina and Temkina, 2004). Many groups appeared in order to address these inequalities; they include both political and other public entities: "The Women of Russia" political party, gender research groups and centres (Moscow, St Petersburg, Ivanovo, Samara, Tver, Omsk, Ulyanovsk, and Saratov), non-governmental organizations, etc. (Kondakov, 2012: 37; Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003: 52, Riabova and Ovcharova, 2016: 7). The activities done by different women's initiatives have been primarily targeting the social issues rather political representation: domestic violence, human trafficking, etc. (Riabova and Ovcharova, 2016: 7). Financial support for gender research and activities mostly came from the international (primarily Western) sponsors that were highly interested in reaching the new huge postcommunist space (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003: 52). However, during the transition period after the dissolution of the USSR, different organizations, which had the agenda of gender equality, had little support of the masses and low levels of participation (Brygalina and Temkina, 2004: 210). Moreover, women in postcommunist countries, who were well-educated, familiar with social benefits and family support and used to work on the labour market, seemed to be well placed to embrace European feminist discourse. However, the move to feminist liberal agenda did not happen (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 543).

Initially in 1990s, the politicians looked rather favorably at those new innovations in the field of gender equality. The reason for this is that at that time Russia was trying to find available ways of its integration into the world's politics and agenda. The Constitution of 1993 secured the equality of men and women. In 1995, the Russian Federation signed the Declaration against all forms of sexual violence and against discrimination against women. During several years, the Parliament had been adopting several laws on regulating gender equality (Ayvazova, 2007: 5). So there was a demand for research and activities about gender issues. The second reason constitutes the fact that the economic situation in Russia was rather bad; therefore, the research institutions, for example, considered international financial help for a new field of gender studies as a source for surviving in difficult times (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014: 256).

However, with times passing, one could see that adopted legislation on gender equality has remained rather declarative. Even when people try to start the judicial procedure on the issue of discrimination, they face many misunderstandings and problems when trying to push forward. The issues of gender discrimination are often perceived as something unimportant, unserious, or socially insignificant. Therefore, Russia has de-jure a very elaborative legislation on gender equality but these mechanisms de-facto cannot be used, or approached, properly because of beliefs existing in society (Ayvazova, 2007: 8).

Nowadays, as it was mentioned above, there are various actors in discussing gender issues in society. Since there is not the exclusive understanding of the “proper” way of constructing gender norms, many contradictory and competing ideologies co-exist in Russian society; these ideas are struggling to get the dominant role in shaping moral values and gender norms according to the prevailed values. Overall, the whole discourse is characterized by coming back to the traditional norms (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2005: 108).

However, the problem here is the term ‘traditional’ as such. Zdravomyslova and Temkina indicate in their research (2005: 109) that the model of a housewife being only a mother and a housekeeper is regarded as traditional mostly in the Western liberal world where this model is the ideal for a bourgeois family. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that the Russian context had been lacking this experience since the emergence of the USSR and the socialistic system when it was hard to find this kind of households in real life, and this type of household was hugely criticized. Therefore, this model was seen (and still is) as something prestigious that women have tended to embrace.

There are much phenomena, which still exist in Russian society due to cultural norms in the past. The Soviet gender contract of “working mother” (the term created by Temkina and Zdravomyslova for the double burden of women in the USSR), the negative perception of female participation in a way that was realized in the socialistic state, and gender traditionalism, or biological determinism, restricted the popularity of feminist and women’s movements in the transition times (Brygalina and Temkina, 2004: 210). It has been discussed above how the labour market in the USSR was segregated: jobs were divided into “feminine” and “masculine”. The situation in contemporary Russia largely remains the same. The Russian culture associates leadership and power with masculinity. People perceived men to hold leadership’s position in politics, business and any kind of administration. Women are seen as functionary of organizational activities (Salmenniemi, 2008). Therefore, in the areas of politics and economy, the gender gap remains sufficient: there is a big difference in wages between men and women holding the same type of

position, in the number of men and women holding higher positions in the hierarchy and being responsible for decision-making (Stellit, 2016).

On the other hand, the socialist way of gender equality was strongly criticized. There has been a dissatisfaction with the Soviet-style emancipation (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013). It was described as the “feminization” of men and the “masculinization” of women, which was perceived negatively and shared by both men and women (Temkina and Zdrovamyslova, 2003: 53). That brought into reality ‘re-traditionalization’ of perceiving gender roles in society. The post-soviet gender relations are characterized with exclusion of women from the public sphere, or even the revival of patriarchy by some scholars (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2003: 54). Nowadays, in the official discourse gender is perceived only with connection to ‘demographic crisis’, ‘traditional family’ and ‘spiritual and moral values’ (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015: 92).

This belief about gender roles justified different gender non-balanced policies and practices in the market, the political system, and reproductive policy (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 546). Some economic resources have been directed to meet citizens’ needs in social support, particularly, maternity leaves and pensions. It must be noted that women find advantages in such policies more directly than men. For example, since 2007, there is a practice of obtaining a maternity capital by a woman who gave birth to the second or third child. However, men from a working class continue to experience unemployment; young deaths from suicide, violence, and alcohol- and tobacco-related illnesses often occur. (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 547)

Despite such tremendous lack of support for working class men, the revival of the rhetoric on masculinity and power has been taking place. One of the displays of such phenomenon is bringing into public and political rhetoric the language of *siloviki*, which are constituted of police, military, and intelligence offices. The own Putin’s masculine image brings the national psychology of masculinity of the state power. (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 547)

Though, there were some efforts to improve the everyday lives of men: some campaigns were organized in the 2010s in order to popularize notions of family responsibilities and healthy lifestyle especially targeted in men. However, the new era of masculinism in the public sphere and beliefs in natural gender differences continue to sustain the ideas of men as protectors and women as needed protection. (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 549)

In general, since the end of 2000s and with the rising of centralized power, gender issues have become extremely politicized and pursued by conservatives in the legal sphere. The Law on Gender Equality was blocked, the legislation on restriction of sexual minorities was pushed forward. Another issue of concern regarding gender equality is the reproductive rights and a

possibility to control own body. Domestic violence and its justifying in society, imperfect legislation in the field of violence, lack of contraceptives, and restrictions on abortions undermine even more the status of women in Russia (Stellit, 2016).

There is also another side of such politicization of gender issues since 2010s. This conservative discourse entered the public sphere of discussion very fast. Paradoxically, this conservative political atmosphere created a demand for research and knowledge on gender issues (Temkina and Zdravomyslova, 2014: 263).

Moreover, some studies indicate that in the political regime that exists in Russia today, women's movements often perform activities associated with traditional gender norms, for example. The reason for this is that such tactics are not seen as political or threatening (Henderson and Jeydel, 2006: 48 quoted in Johnson and Saarinen, 2013). Therefore, the political situation in contemporary Russia closes opportunities for activists who would frame claims on gender equality; as a result, it drives feminists underground. However, it is also difficult to come to any clear conclusion about correlation between the position of movements and the contemporary political regime since the latter is coexisted with both democratic and authoritarian features. (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013: 545)

Nonetheless, some reports indicate some improvements having been recently made in the field of status of women. Such measures included the improvement of the availability of legal aid for women, prohibition on mentioning sex, age, and familial status as factors for job applying, help for pregnant women and women with children. Moreover, in comparison to other countries, Russia has a high level of female professors at universities. In general, women and men get different levels of education evenly. Some high political positions are also held by women (for example, the Chairperson of the Federation Council); however, the overall figure of female representation in politics remains low (around 13-20 %) (Stellit, 2016).

As for the legislation, even though it is imperfect in details, there is an overall legal system providing the equality between women and men. As it was mentioned above, the Constitution and other legislative norms secure the egalitarian discourse; it can be claimed that formal institutions are aimed at elimination of gender inequality in society (Ayvazova, 2007: 5).

St Petersburg is recognized as a leading federal subject in Russia for overcoming gender discrimination. Within the framework of the Committee of Social Affairs in St Petersburg, there is the Council on Equality between Men and Women and Violence Prevention in St Petersburg. Moreover, there are a shelter for permanent staying and social rehabilitation for victims of human

trafficking, the work done by the Red Cross in St Petersburg for migrant women, and activities of the Centre for Prevention and Control of AIDS towards sex workers (Stellit, 2016).

The most recognizable feminist activism that existed prior to 2011 was the women's crisis centres. The movement of such centres was built in the 1990s through local and transnational corporation. In the 2000s there were about one or two hundred hotlines and other services available for women who experienced domestic and sexual violence. Apart from the direct help to victims, they also pursued other goals; among them are increasing of public awareness about gender violence, challenging 'victim blaming' (a belief about woman's own responsibility for the violence against her) and calling for responding to the problem by local authorities. Within relatively weak Russian civil society, the history of women's crisis centres was moderately successful because they provided social services and advocated for social and political changes (Johnson and Saarinen, 2013).

Apart from some little success having been achieved in gender equality, there are still a lot to do. Thus, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has provided a list of recommendations for the Russian Federation in 2015. The list includes problematic areas, which are needed to be addressed in broader scale: increasing awareness of women's rights and questioning stereotypes about gender roles and duties in a family and society as a whole, improving legislation on gender equality, creating more efficient mechanisms for protection of women's rights, and violation of rights of specific groups among women (sex workers, sexual minorities, migrants) (Stellit, 2016).

Nevertheless, the conservative discourse remains the most powerful one. Thereby, there are several factors that explain non-popularity of the discourse on equality and emergence of neotraditional gender roles. They include reproduction of old practices of paternalist state control, lack of grassroots support for feminist activism, neotraditional gendered political discourse and disregard of academic gender research (Kondakov, 2012: 38). Thus, the formal equality is still guaranteed by the Constitution; however, normative declarations have been hugely replaced by neotraditional practices.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

4.1 Research Design and Case Study

Case study represents the way of organizing the study, i.e. one of the parts of the research design; the research, in its turn, is of qualitative methods. As a rule, gender studies are performed with the use of qualitative methods (Rocheva, 2012: 105). Since gender is a complex issue related to social constructs and power relations in the society, it is important to capture this complexity. Doing a case study research means analyzing a subject of a research within its context, which might be social, political, organizational, or economic, depending on what a researcher would like to achieve. A subject, moreover, presents an example from a real live, which could describe the whole studied phenomenon in order to draw further conclusions. Thus, a case study is one of the commonest approaches across social and political sciences. (Adolphus, n.d.) Since this research puts a big emphasis on the importance of the contexts, in which domestication takes place, case study appears to be very relevant.

Additionally, some scholars underline (e.g. Yin, 2006 in Adolphus, n.d.) that case study is best applicable when research seeks to answer descriptive or explanatory questions. This research has a descriptive nature, analyzing *how* domestication takes place. That is another reason for implying case study research. Finally, case study is relevant for describing a situation occurring in the present, which is the case with collaboration on gender equality between Nordic and Russian authorities and feminist movements. That is one of advantages of such method: it offers a possibility to get a rich picture of a real phenomenon. (Adolphus, n.d.)

Talking about cases, there have been two collaborative programmes chosen for this research: they are the units of analysis. The first one represents a programme of cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and North-West Russia. The unit of analysis here is the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg. The reasons for choosing this body are, first, the fact that St Petersburg is a part of North-West Russia and plays the most vivid example of the federal subject in Russia, which works on gender equality issues; second, the governmental body, which accumulates the activities for promoting gender equality, is exactly the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg. Another unit of analysis represents a non-governmental project of collaboration between activists: the “Eve’s Ribs” project, which has been implemented mostly between the Russian and Finnish activists and experts. At this case, the Russian groups from St Petersburg and Samara have been selected for data analysis: the St Petersburg activists represent both organizers and participants of the festival, the Samara group gives a good example of the gender equality agenda in the Russian federal subjects. Moreover, it is important to choose a representative cases:

apart from analyzing the activists from St Petersburg, who have potentially the history of integration into transnational feminist activism, the group from the Samara oblast has been chosen as representatives of more provincial Russian activism (Ackerly, 2008: 35). The group of the Finnish organizers also has been included into the analysis. Such choice has been made after a process of participant observation during the “Eve’s Ribs” festival within the project. A more thorough description of the cases will be presented in the beginning of analytical chapters.

Finally, some discussion on generalizability of case study is in need. Some scholars, especially proponents of the natural science, argue that one cannot generalize from case study and, therefore, such research design cannot be scientific. However, other scholars have been indicating that even though case studies should be approached with a special attention, they can be representative if cases are chosen respectfully. (Atkinson and Delamont, 2010: 4) It has been considered that domestication of the Nordic ideas in the Russian context would be best seen in the processes of cooperation: thus, it could be concluded where such ideas are coming from. The process of selection of cases has been undergone the thorough primary search of all cooperation programmes between Russia and the Nordic countries: two selected cases, first, represent two levels of public relations between different actors and, second, seem to be one of the biggest in the analyzed areas (governmental and activist).

Moreover, a researcher often possesses multiple sources of evidence when it comes to a case study; it can also increase the verification of an analysis (Woodside, 2010: 107). For this research, participant observation, interviews, and searching for primary data from websites, documents, etc. have been chosen as methods for collecting data.

4.2 Gathering Data for the First Case: Cooperation between Nordic Council of Ministers and Authorities of St Petersburg

This case underpins how transfer of gender equality policies takes place at the level of the authorities. As it has been mentioned above, the Committee for Social Policies was chosen as a unit of analysis for this case: this is a body within the administration of St Petersburg, which primarily organizes work for gender equality and publishes relevant documents. Thus, at their relevant web-page dedicated to the issues of gender equality (<http://gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/trud/gender/>), there have been five documents (out of seven), selected for the analysis. Other two documents by the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg has been found online through other links at the web-site of the Administration of St Petersburg after having been mentioned in previous collected material.

Therefore, only documents and website material have been used for this part of the research. It was difficult to contact representatives of the Committee for Social Affairs who are involved in the process of cooperation with the Nordic Council. Therefore, I did not manage to find any interviewees.

Moreover, in order to get full understanding of the case, the relevant information sources with primary data has been studied. It included two web-sites: the Nordic and the Russian web-sites for cooperation: norden.org and norden.spb.ru. At the former, the section of cooperation with North-West Russia has been studied (<http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/ministers-for-co-operation-mr-sam/russia>): it includes news on the cooperation processes, the description of cooperation, relevant documents. In the end, four documents have been selected for analyzing the case. It appears important to emphasize that all collected data represents *raw* material, which means that it has not undergone any interpretations, but looks as it has been intended to do for its purposes.

In this research, data is seen from the interpretivist point of view, which means that information presented in the analyzed documents is influenced by the social environment (“How to Use Secondary Data”, n.d.). Moreover, it directly corresponds to the research questions and theoretical framework such as how the Russian context influences the transferring policies. Therefore, the research itself is not concerned with the fact of interpretation of the data by those, who have elaborated on it; on the contrary, the research seeks to find meanings in those interpretations.

4.3 Gathering Data for the Second Case: “Eve’s Ribs” Project

“Eve’s Ribs” represents a cooperative project on gender equality among feminist activists from different countries, mostly, from Russia and Finland. Since it is of a different nature than the first case in terms of their activities for achieving gender equality, different data sets are needed for an analysis here.

While the governmental bodies are the official ones, they make policies, programmes and recommendations, which can be found publicly; to some extent, it is their final goal, and the case of domestication (policies themselves). However, it is more difficult to capture the domestication process of gender equality ideas during the activist counteractions since they do not present formal reports on their activities and their evaluation; the researcher needs to “read” these meanings throughout different representation of their work. Therefore, implementation of several methods

for data collection was needed in this case. Thus, data sets include interviews with organizers and participants (some of them are both), participant observation and data from public sources.

Participant observation represents observing a subject of a research in its realms, and is described as an ethnographic data collection method. Participant observation may be carried out in different formats depending on the role of a researcher in the subject's activities. During this research, my role at some activities of the "Eve's Rib's" project can be described as being a participant as observer. I was a volunteer at one part of the project, specifically, at the "Eve's Ribs" festival, which took place in St Petersburg on 10-13 June, 2016. My role as a researcher was disclosed to the organizers of the festival. Thus, such role at the case study can be also described as facilitator: a researcher seeks to help subjects in their activities to present changes in the world. Moreover, during the time after the festival, I have attended several events made by the St Petersburg participants and organizers of the project. The problem, which is related to this method and discussed in the scientific community, is the fact that a researcher might lose his or her objectivity while doing a participant observation research since one has a chance to neglect some important points. ("How to Use Ethnographic Methods", n.d.) However, this issue is not applicable to this research since the information has not been included in the data sets; however, it helped to familiarize myself with the project in order to successfully describe it in the research and prepare relevant questions for the interviews.

On the contrary, such method has allowed to use its advantages. First, personally knowing the project helped me to analyze better the data collected during the interviews: words of the participants have been combined with the knowledge of performed activities and their behaviour. The words of interviewees are not independent realms: they are highly dependent on the context, which they are spoken from. Therefore, knowing the context of the project and the festival helped me to put interviewees' words and reflections in the context (Leander, 2008: 14), which I had an opportunity to observe while volunteering for the festival. Moreover, volunteering at the festival gave me an opportunity to communicate with all the participants to some extent; this fact then facilitated the process of choosing key interviewees for conducting the interviews with. Additionally, it should be noted that researchers are always marked with their characteristics; therefore, being supportive to the ideas, which are shared by the Russian feminist activists involved in the project, and helping them with organizing the festival allowed myself to facilitate the research process, enter their closed group, and make a better analysis (Gusterson, 2008: 96; Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2014).

The second, and the main, method for data collection for this case was conducting interviews with those key interviewees that have been selected after the process of participant observation during

the “Eve’s Ribs” festival” in June. As Hannabuss (1996: 23) describes the importance of such method,

We [researchers] want the respondents' own perspective to emerge, explore the ways in which people working together share common understandings, get insight into particular experiences, find out motives behind decisions, get a view of informal procedures, consider apparent contradictions between attitudes and behaviour, and allow respondents time to provide their answers.

Thus, interviews seem to be a very important method while making a research on domestication where those meanings and evaluation of the Nordic gender equality attitudes are not seen directly from the activities themselves; they need to be “extracted” from the participants of the cooperation process in order for the researcher to draw conclusions.

The interviews for this research has been mainly conducted face to face, apart from one interview with a Finnish organizer, which has been done through Skype. All the interviews have been audio recorded. Overall, there are four interviews with six key participants from the “Eve’s Ribs” project: one interview with two representatives of the Samara group, one interview with two feminist activists from St Petersburg, who organizes the activities of the project, two separate interviews with two organizers of the project from the Finnish side. Thus, two sets of interviews were paired since activists came from the same local groups; through the paired interviews I wanted to get a picture how a particular group with the same agenda coming from a particular federal subject sees the Finnish understanding of gender equality and how they would domesticate such ideas as one actor.

Qualitative methods, in general, have been empowered by the feminist researchers as ones, which provide an opportunity to capture experiences of vulnerable and repressed groups, including women and feminist activists (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2014: 86). Interviews conducted with the informants for this research can be characterized as something in-between semi-structured and non-directive in-depth interview; in general, such method is best used for research questions that are less precise and require in-depth reflections by respondents. Extracting opinions on domestication and adaptation of ideas demands openness of the interview process. Thus, while conducted interviews, I followed the list of topics to cover; however, they have been open for the respondents to answer in a way they felt more suitable. Thus, the process of interviews has not been strictly ruled by prepared questions since the goal was to yield subconsciously buried information; sometimes, the process of analyzing the issue of cooperation takes more time than directly answering questions so it was quite normal to get back to some issues and stories during the interviews. Shifting towards the use of non-directive in-depth interviews as one of the main methods for this research is a clear choice being made according to feminist considerations.

Moreover, such interview framework eliminates the hierarchal power relations between an interviewer and an interviewee, which has been hugely criticized by feminist researchers (see e.g., Mauthner et. al., 2002; Ackerly, 2008).

Thus, interviews have been made according to a general guideline and included, first, some general topics in order to facilitate the process of introduction:

- background of interviewees, their previous activities on gender equality
- how the “Eve’s Ribs” project has been born (for the organizers) / how the interviewees have decided to participate in the project

Another part of the interviews was dedicated to the topics related to the process of collaboration and domestication:

- why the project is international (for the organizers), why the Finnish side has been chosen for cooperation (for the Russian organizers)
- the topic of expertise: who is considered as ones transferring knowledge
- learning process during the project: new ideas, which have been adopted and implemented in the practice or, at least, at the level of analysis
- disagreements: the facts of rejection of some ideas or practices by the Russian participants
- the reason for choosing topics for cooperation and presentation at the festival/during the project

Almost all the interviews have been conducted in Russian; there was only one done in English: with the Finnish organizer of the project. Other material is mostly in Russian as well. Therefore, the issue of translation arises. It is important to emphasized that the quotes provided in this research have been translated; the issue of interpretation needs to be taken into account. Moreover, the Russian language is characterized by masculinism (Rojavin, 2010: 512) meaning that some words might indicate people of either sex; however, such words, as a rule, are marked by masculine grammatical gender. Thus, while in many documents, especially, governmental ones, such tendency is present, feminist activists try to change the language and transform the culture of speaking inventing and using the female versions for different words (usually, with the help of suffixes), which are not part of everyday Russian. Such peculiarities are lost while translating quotes in English. The same goes with mentioning any person in everyday speech: while it is common for English to use “he or she” in sentences while speaking about any potential person, the Russian language is still characterized by using male pronouns; this has been adopted to the norms of the English language while translating. However, in order to overcome losing meanings while translating, original versions of quotes are presented throughout the research in footnotes.

The last remark considering the process of interview conduction is that they are also seen from a constructionist point of view as well as governmental documents as it has been discussed above. Thus, here is a paradigm that interviewees do not provide a researcher with the images of reality, but rather construct their own meanings (“How to Analyze Qualitative Data”, n.d.); this is what a research on domestication tries to achieve.

Apart from interviews, which was the main method for collecting data, some data from public sources has been analyzed for this case. First, the web-site (<http://rebraevy.ru/ru/main/>), the public pages in vk.com of the “Eve’s Ribs” project (https://vk.com/rebra_evi) and the “Eve’s Ribs” festival (<https://vk.com/evasribs>) have been checked. Those material, which has been selected for the analysis, included information about the cooperation processes with the Finnish participants or own initiatives by the Russian activists. This part of data collection was made after the primary analysis of the case and the interviews with participants; it allowed to select suitable material: facts about cooperation with the Finnish participants, such topics as gender-based violence, intersectional approach, discussion on political context. Moreover, posts at the public pages of the “Eve’s Ribs” project has led to five interviews given by the participants to different media.

Moreover, the content of the “Eve’s Ribs” public pages has led to examination of another local project made by one of the participant of St Petersburg; this project underlines the principle of intersectionality and has been started while making a collaboration with the Finnish partners. The project represents the newspaper for women with migrant background living in St Petersburg. For the analysis of this part, the public page of this project and three interviews of the organizer have been analyzed: <https://vk.com/gazetagul>.

4.4 Content analysis

Content analysis has been used as the method for analysis. This is one of the commonest methods for case study research. Moreover, content analysis is often used when the extraction of meanings from texts (in a broad term) is needed (Herman, 2008: 152). Yin (quoted in Adolphus, n.d.) mentions five analytical techniques while using content analysis; cross-case synthesis is implemented in this research. Such technique is applicable to case studies where there are at least two cases, which are analyzed as separate studies compared afterwards. At content analysis, data is grouped according to different variables. For its purpose, a researcher should rely on the study’s theoretical propositions in order to code collected information. The coding process has been done during and after collection of all the data: thus, data has been analyzed according to the theoretical background and interconnections among variables in texts. It is emphasized that doing a qualitative

research is not that linear that quantitative one; that is why processes of data collection and data analysis overlap and happen simultaneously. (Adolphus, n.d.)

Therefore, the process of coding was carrying out throughout the research period. A unit of analysis represents different topics and ideas: thus, after finding interconnections among collected texts, they have been laid out into separate topics. It is important to understand here possible differences in discourses of communication depending on the context: names, meanings, and characteristics are attached to the context existing around us (Dunn, 2008: 80). Therefore, coding was carried out not on the basis of words, but of the ideas, which could be formulated in different terms in Nordic and Russian contexts, but relate to the same meaning.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is related to any human conduct. Therefore, it applies to the research where people are subjects of a study. In social research, “it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process” (Mauther et. al., 2002). Moreover, Hammersley (1999: 18, quoted in Mather et. al., 2002) argues that ‘ethicism’ is one of the main tendencies in modern qualitative research: this is a tendency to see ethics as a format of doing research. There is a need to mention some remarks related to ethical issues in this research. They do not arise while dealing with data collected for the first case: all the documents are published publicly at mentioned web-sites, everyone can get an access to them.

Ethical issues are a subject of concerns for the “Eve’s of Ribs” case. First, data collected for this case includes interviews; all the participants have been given a relevant information about the researcher and the research. They provided their consent to participate in the research and record their interviews. Some of them have rejected the fact of using their names in the research; therefore, all the analysis for this case is anonymized. It includes both research and media interviews since there are the same people in these sources. Therefore, each interviewee is assigned with the letter; overall, 8 letters (from A to H) represents different participants of the project in this research: 6 of them are interviewees, the quotes of other two activists have been taken from media interviews and anonymized as well. The list of interviews, which have been published in open sources, can be found in the list of references; those interviews, conducted during the research, are listed in the Appendix 1 with indicated letters. Moreover, while doing a participant observation, and participating in the festival as a volunteer, we have discussed my research with the organizers of the festival; therefore, they have not been deceived and understood the purpose of my observations.

4.6 Being a Feminist Researcher

This research has been undertaken with the feminist perspectives. Thus, in practice, it means the approach that research is always based on situated knowledge possessed and received by a researcher. The competencies, background and beliefs of a researcher cannot be eliminated while using a methodological toolkit; therefore, any research is ideologically and politically biased. This should be considered in this study as well; a choice of topics, data, methods as well as the fact of volunteering for the “Eve’s Ribs” project underlines the beliefs and values of a researcher. Moreover, feminist researchers often promote activist research aimed at providing help for those struggling with the issues of inequality. However, it is a goal for researchers to recognize their biasness and control it in order to provide a professional work. (Zdravomyslova and Temkina, 2014) These issues have been considered while making this research.

5. THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND AUTHORITIES OF ST PETERSBURG: DOMESTICATION ON OFFICIAL LEVEL

5.1. Introducing the Case

Cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and the North-West federal subjects of Russia started in 1995; since then, the parties have been building mutual projects and working on different issues together. The federal subjects involved in the cooperation processes include those bordering with the Nordic countries or Baltic States; it is Arkhangelsk Oblast, Kaliningrad Oblast, Leningrad Oblast, Murmansk Oblast, Pskov Oblast, the Republic of Karelia and the city of St Petersburg. The key areas of cooperation are identified by both parties: the regional and federal authorities in Russia and the Nordic Council of Ministers; the latter puts an emphasis on selecting such key sectors for public sector and civil-society partners as well. Even though the cooperation itself takes place in the federal subjects of North-West Russia, the Nordic partners surely keep the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant federal organs updated of international activities. The Russian authorities working in the federal subjects, in their turn, report in details about mutual activities to the accordant institutions in Moscow.

Cooperation between Nordic and Russian partners is considered to be of a great mutual value since it keeps more transparent and trustful relationships among countries and leads to positive exchange of experiences in a wide range of fields. The areas for collaboration can, in principle, include any of those, which would be of common interest for both parties. Over the years, one of such focus areas has been “promoting democracy, respect for human rights and civil society by working together on democracy and good governance in local government, inter-parliamentary collaboration”. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013a)

As for the gender equality agenda, it has been also shown as one of the key interests for cooperation. Thus, at the Russian web-site for the cooperation with the Nordic partners, gender equality is listed as one of the prioritized areas of cultural and educational activities along with ecology, social support, civil society, culture, intersectoral work (Onas, n.d.). The cooperation has been taking place across three geographical regions; one of them was North-West Russia (others are the Nordic countries themselves and the Baltic states). Each of these regions had their own prioritized themes depending on key interests and those topics parties agreed to collaborate on. For the Russian federal subjects, such priorities included, first, gender equality education and, second, zero tolerance for gender-based violence. Moreover, such areas as gender mainstreaming and the active participation of boys/men are included in each geographical region of the cooperation programme.

Talking about the organization of the work, it must be noticed that there is a special body in the Nordic Council of Ministers, which is responsible for the work on gender equality and cooperation on the matter: the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality (MR-JÄM). Moreover, there is the Committee of Senior Officials for Gender Equality (ÄK- JÄM), which is an operation organ for MR-JÄM: it prepares businesses for it and implements its decisions. NIKK (Nordic Information on Gender) is included in the Nordic Council of Ministers' organ for cooperation; its task is to highlight and disseminate gender-equality research, policies and practices from a Nordic perspective.

As a rule, financial liabilities for different projects are shared between the Nordic and Russian parties equally; thus, 50/50 is declared as a desirable standard; however, it might be changed according to circumstances.

5.2 Initiated by Nordic Partners

The co-operation is declared to be of a mutual benefit for both parties; the goal of this research does not include the evaluation of the whole process of communication among countries involved and drawing conclusions about how useful it could be for the parties. However, it seems appropriate to pay attention to the fact who is actually presented as one initiated most of the collaboration, especially, one on the gender equality. This fact would influence the process of domestication: who translates the ideas and whether there is a willingness to transfer such policies or not.

If the collaboration exists, it claims that it appears to be beneficial for both parties. However, when it comes to gender equality, it seems that the Nordic countries are the ones who would rather include this agenda in the co-operation process. Development of civil society based on the equality ideas is seen to be one of the guarantees of the security in the regions by the Nordic countries.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' cooperation with North-West Russia focuses in particular on promoting democracy and civil society based on values such as human rights, equality, tolerance, the rule of law and good governance. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013a)

Since dynamics in the Nordic region are highly influenced by the situation in Russia, the Nordic states would rather include the North-West federal subjects in Russia to the zone of collaboration on the matter of promoting gender equality.

Two of the Nordic countries share borders with Russia and the Baltic and Barents seas also bind us to our neighbor in the East. Historically, events in Russia have had a direct impact on stability and development in the Nordic region. (Co-operation with Russia, n.d.)

Thus, in the Guidelines for the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation with North-West Russia from 2014 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013a) it is specified,

The Nordic Council of Ministers would like to consolidate and expand this co-operation, and develop closer links between the Nordic Region and North-West Russia in order to strengthen the stability, security and development of the region and to maintain Russia's role as an active partner in the regional co-operation.

Building a strong region, which Russia is a part of and contributes to the overall situation there, is of a great importance for the Nordic states. However, Russia is the country in the region, which is less of all integrated in the mutual European zones, including, the European Union; that is why, the states put a specific attention for collaborating with Russia in the region.

The co-operation with North-West Russia also helps build a strong and cohesive Barents Region and Baltic Sea Region through establishment of networks across the region. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013a)

Another factor that adds to the conclusion of a bigger desire to build a cooperation by the Nordic partners is the fact that since the last year, after restoration of collaboration processes (which stopped after the Crimean crisis), the projects are solely financed by the Nordic partners; it amplifies the fact that the Nordic partners are eager for cooperation in order to build the safer region.

As for the solely gender equality agenda, the Nordic partners also emphasize that to some extent it is their responsibility to promote the gender equality values based on their positive experience and benefits. Thus, during the Swedish presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2013, they put a special emphasis on cooperation in the field of gender equality and developed a programme; such cooperation also included Russia. They underline that more gender equal societies are both more just and economically beneficial for states. Here is one of the provisions from this programme.

We cannot take for granted that worldwide, society will automatically continue to move toward greater equality. In many areas, the development is going in the opposite direction, even as we continue to move forward. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013b)

Additionally, the programme underlines that it is the responsibility of the Nordic region to continue promotion of their knowledge and practices on gender equality:

Gender equality is an issue on which the Nordic Region has a strong profile, and other countries have also shown interest in learning from our work. [...] The Nordic Region will continue to assume responsibility for co-operation in an international perspective, and to participate, through dialogue and discussion, in international forums with a view to promoting gender equality. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2013b)

In general, it could be said that such a high profile in achieving gender equality is very valuable for the Nordic countries. They emphasize that it is very important to keep working on gender equality and increase knowledge about it both among citizens of the Nordic countries and those outside from the region.

Therefore, it could be seen that even though the cooperation surely is beneficial for both parties, the Nordic countries act as those who initiate such collaboration, especially, in the field of gender equality. They underline that the cooperation with Russia is organized by the Nordic Council of Ministers and aims for building good neighbourly relations in order to strengthen gender equality across the whole region. It does not automatically mean that most of ideas would be rejected while coming to the Russian context; however, it might complicate the process of policy transfer and bring into reality the high level of adaption of such ideas and policies on the ground.

5.3 What Nordic Council of Ministers Would Like to Achieve?

As it has been established above, it is the Nordic countries who translate the ideas of gender equality and the Russian side who would receive them and adopt to the Russian context. While doing collaboration, the Nordic side is presented as some kind of an expert that possesses a positive experience of implementing gender equality policies, which benefits to the society and which they are eager to work on further and translate to other regions, including, North-West Russia. Therefore, it might seem logical to look at what the Nordic Council of Ministers would like to collaborate on in the field of gender equality and promote to other parties.

The cooperation programme has been launched in 2015 until 2018 (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015). Even though it will be seen further that it has undergone changes in practice since the cooperation between the Nordic Council of Ministers and Russia was ceased to the great extent after the Crimean crisis, it nevertheless underpins those ideas that the Nordic countries translate to other contexts and would like to see developing in other regions.

Thus, the programme developed by the Nordic Council of Ministers includes two big themes: first, the public sphere, and second, welfare and innovation. Along with them, there are two other

horizontal themes: sustainable development with a focus on diversity, and participation by men and boys in gender-equality work. Additionally, the programme emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming, which can be seen as a part of the strategy for achieving their goals. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 5)

As for the framework for ensuring gender equality in the public sphere, the Nordic states seek to build societies where women and men have equal access to the decision-making processes, which would influence the design of the societies. However, decision-making processes do not only include a political sphere; additionally, it is emphasized that women and men should have an equal opportunity to contribute to and influence on the discourse in the media and economics. Media, in its turn, includes journalism, advertising, computer games and social media. It is important that media portrays realistic images of women and men and counteract sexualization of the public sphere, provide an adequately wide range of role models for both genders. In order to achieve it, there is exactly a need for a bigger representation of both genders in a decision-making process. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 14-15)

As for the welfare and innovation theme, it has been emphasized with several goals. First, educations should be equally accessible for women, men, girls and boys since the learning process develops one's interests and talents and fulfills personal ambitions. The problem lying here is that there are existing stereotypes in the society about male and female fields of work; it also influences which fields of study girls and boys choose to apply for. Moreover, the children's gender roles start to form at very early age; thus, it is important that curricula at educational institutions would be developed according with gender equality perspective in order for girls and boys not to "leave school with different knowledge and skills based on their gender" (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 17). Additionally, equal access to the labour market should be provided, and women and must equally benefit from their work. Equal pay for equal work is considered to be the absolute condition for economic growth. Moreover, such conditions contribute to financial independence. Financial independence, in its turn, contributes to the opportunity to reconcile family life and work, which is seen as the third goal in this framework. Additionally, parenthood and taking care of household should be of an equal opportunity for women and men. It could be achieved through promoting the right for parental or care leave for fathers as well. The cooperation also includes developing a zero-tolerance approach to gender-related violence; the latter includes "violence in the home or in close relationships, various forms of sexual violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour-related violence or oppression, and human trafficking for sexual purposes" (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 18). Finally, access to health care and social services is of a great importance. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 17-18)

Apart from these two overarching themes, the Nordic Council of Ministers have also named two horizontal topics. The first one is sustainable development with a focus on diversity, which means providing people with “resources, skills and quality of life regardless of gender, age, faith, sexuality, ability or ethnicity” (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 11). The second topic is men’s and boys’ participation in the gender equality work, which is seen as crucial for achieving their goals. It does not mean anymore that men and boys would simply participate in the women’s struggle for equality, but that the gender equality agenda includes issues, which are relevant specifically for men, for example, health, welfare, education, marginalization, and fatherhood/solidarity. According to the Nordic Council of Ministers, in order to give effect to these practices, there is a need to ensure such distribution of care responsibilities, which would be more equal within families, since in that case, women would have more opportunities at the labour market while men could take a more active part in parenthood. Moreover, it is important to engage men to work in traditionally “feminine” areas in order to counteract the gender-segregated labour market and to close the gender pay gap. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 11-12)

However, the Nordic countries acknowledge that such goals could be achieved through different means and policy measures; that was actually the case inside the Nordic countries as well. Thus, they have emphasized the goal of supporting the national practices related to building the gender equal societies and all sectors within the Nordic Council of Ministers in its work to promote gender equality. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 7)

As it as mentioned above, gender mainstreaming is named as one of the strategies or promoting gender equality. Thus, the Nordic Council of Ministers uses this tool itself: thus, the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation arrived at a decision to incorporate gender mainstreaming into all activities performed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In practice, it means that all sectors of their work are integrated with gender equality agenda and being sensitive to this issue. In order to successfully implement this strategy, dialogue and cooperation among the different sectors are needed; the gender equality sector then supports and coordinates the whole process of gender mainstreaming. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 9)

It is specified that a successful work on gender equality policies need to be developed according to reliable research, which would include proper statistics and data; statistics should be gender-based in order to better understand social processes in the gender perspective. Other methods can also include opinion-making, dissemination of the best practices, creating platforms for international discussions as well as exchanging information on national legislation. (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015: 11)

5.4 Russian Initiatives on Gender Equality

5.4.1 Local Domestication: North-West Russia as Leader in Gender Equality

Before going into details about those measures, which has been implemented in Russia in the field of gender equality, it needs to be specified that such measures and discussions are highly present exactly in North-West Russia to a greater degree: North-West is rather advanced in terms of taking care of gender-based issues in their policies.

As the activities for gender equality in St Petersburg are analyzed, it could be seen that there is a specific body performing them: The Coordination Council for Issues of Equality between Men and Women and Prevention of Violence in St Petersburg created in 2016. Activities of the Council are controlled by the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg. The Council is established

for the purposes of efficient interactions among local authorities of St Petersburg, local self-governing authorities of St Petersburg, public associations and other organizations of St Petersburg in order to develop proposals for forming and putting into practice public policies in the fields of equality between men and women in all spheres of social life, including of prevention of violence². (Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg, 25.06.2016)

The Council consists of around 35 members coming from different institutions: they include both governmental bodies and NGOs. They seek to achieve different goals. First, they work with legislation: it includes preparing proposals for the authorities of different levels in order to improve legislation for equality between men and women and violence prevention, and making examination of draft bills: how such bills correspond to the gender equality agenda. Thus, the Council analyzes the legislation and draws a conclusion whether laws correspond to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international legal documents, which Russia is a part of. The Council makes proposals for the authorities in St Petersburg aimed at achieving equal opportunities for men and women, improving social benefits and legal protection for pregnant women and women with kids, counteracting violence in St Petersburg. It is important to specify here that their activities are often directed at specific gender's needs as it is seen with the case of helping specifically women who have kids. This issue will be discussed further.

Moreover, they facilitate designing different strategies, plans for events, projects and programmes, which goal is to work on gender equality, prevention of violence and further work with victims of

² "v tseliakh éffektivnogo vzaimodeĭstviia organov gosudarstvennoĭ vlasti Sankt-Peterburga, organov mestnogo samoupravleniia v Sankt-Peterburge, obshchestvennykh ob"edineniĭ i inykh organizatsiĭ Sankt-Peterburga po vyrabotke predlozheniĭ dlia formirovaniia i realizatsii gosudarstvennoĭ politiki v oblasti ravnopraviia muzhchin i zhenshchin vo vsekhn sferakh zhizni obshchestva, v tom chisle v oblasti profilaktiki nasiliia."

violence. In this regard, they also help different public organizations to hold events, which would promote the culture of equality between men and women.

Finally, they aim for popularizing knowledge and research about gender equality in the society; this includes increase of values of mutual respect, non-violent conflict-resolution and behaviour. For that reason, the Council monitors and analyzes the position of men and women in St Petersburg and prepares different material on positions of men and women in different areas: economics, politics, social and cultural fields. These kinds of material and research furthermore are presented at various meetings and conferences; moreover, the Council has a goal to have a voice through media as well and popularize its ideas there.

The final note that seems important to emphasize here is the volunteer method of work at the Council. Even though the Council is integrated into the system of local government of St Petersburg and was created as a special body of the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg, the experts, who are a part of the Council, fulfill their competencies there on the voluntary basis. It means that even though there is a request at the level of the society and authorities to work on the gender equality agenda, they do not have much support from outside and need to organize their work based on their desire to promote such agenda.

As it has been discussed in the theoretical part of this research, domestication means adaptation of policies and ideas according to the local context during the process of their transfer (Alasuutari, 2009). In the Russian case, it seems that contexts for domestication are formed *locally*, which means *regionally, not nationally*. The Federation constitutes of federal subjects, which are rather different in their cultures (including the political one); thus, it is possible to transfer some ideas and policies to some federal subjects and not possible to do it successfully into others. The North-West federal subjects in Russia has been domesticating the gender-equality policies; additionally, the same process appears while analyzing the cooperation among activists, which will be discussed further more. Therefore, it seems that what is impossible to domesticate at the whole federal level in terms of gender equality because of great differences among the Russian federal subjects, is possible to perform at the local authorities' level.

5.4.2 Attitudes towards Gender Equality: General Overview

Before going into details how the authorities in St Petersburg underpin specific issues in term of gender equality, it seems appropriate to first give a general overview how the issues of gender equality are understood by those working in the official institutions of St Petersburg. The analysis

here is primarily based on the Concept for Gender Policies of St Petersburg (Kontseptsiia , n.d.). However, it is highly important to mention that even though the project of this Concept has been entirely created, it has not passed and become a legislative document. However, those, working on the project from the Administration of St Petersburg, have underpinned their attitudes towards gender equality issues in the project.

Human development, which includes recognition of a value for every person, creation of conditions for self-development, realization of ambitions, is crucial for person's contribution to the development of society. In its turn, human development is impossible without considering a gender perspective. Only by this approach, *social-economic development of a country* is possible. Thus, the understanding of a role, which a gender perspective plays in the process of economic growth, is similar to the one in the Nordic countries. Such gendered approach towards making policies needs an advanced political system and development of democratic institutions, where authorities and civil society interact closely while working on gender equality.

However, it is specified that the policies implemented by the authorities of St Petersburg do not have a goal to overcome and eliminate "objectively conditional gender differences". Therefore, it could be seen that an emphasis on gender differences is stronger in the Russian context. Thus, while making policies with a consideration of a gender perspective, it sometimes means reacting to the women's or men's positions in the society, not equalization of their experience in life as it will be seen further on some examples. It could be said that the idea of biological differences, which was much present during the Soviet times, still plays a considerable role in the Russian context; that is why some policies aimed at gender equality would not mean the same as it does in the Nordic context.

However, the Concept underlines that its goal is to assure realization of equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for men and women as it is enshrined in the Constitution and international documents, which the Russian Federation is a part of. In order to do so, it is important to collaborate for authorities with civil society and NGOs.

There are several reasons for developing the Concept of Gender Policies, which are named in the document. First, it acknowledges the importance of fulfilling international obligations of the Russian Federation in the field of gender equality and human rights. Moreover, it is important that the state, trade unions and employers would include a gender perspective in their activities. This result is quite hard to achieve in practice since it requests a long work in this direction and dialogue with representatives of the labour market. It is difficult to evaluate for now how much this goal has been achieved. However, such approach somehow replicates the method of gender

mainstreaming in the Nordic countries when a gender-equality perspective is incorporated into different bodies.

Meanwhile, it is important to emphasize that gender mainstreaming in the political institutions has been already partly implemented. Thus, there are some smaller departments of the Coordination Councils; they have been established at territorial executive bodies in various districts of St Petersburg.

There are other methods named at the Concept for improving a gender-based approach while implementing different policies in practice. There is a need for an expertize, which would analyze the practices of public administration and law making in terms of a gender perspective. Another important tool is raising awareness about gender policies among population through different means of media; it should be done in order to improve knowledge on legislation and overall competencies of people in the gender-related topics.

5.4.3 Counteracting Gender-Based Violence

A zero tolerance towards gender-based violence has been named as one of the prioritized themes for cooperation between North-West of Russia and the Nordic Council of Ministers. It can be said that this topic is of high importance for the Russian context; thus, the local authorities pay a special attention to dealing with this problem. Additionally, it seems necessary to specify at this stage of this work as well that gender-based violence plays a great role in the activities of the Russian feminist activists, which will be seen further. All of it indicates a great importance of this issue in the Russian society.

Additionally, it could be seen that the issue of gender-based violence is even included in the name of The Coordination Council for Issues of Equality between Men and Women and Prevention of Violence in St Petersburg. However, it must be noticed that from 2014 until 2016, there were two separate bodies: The Coordination Council for Issues of Equality between Men and Women in St Petersburg and the Coordination Council for Prevention of Violence in Families and Other Related Social Institutions. Apparently, since the Councils had started to work, experts participating in the activities of the Councils realized that these two different topics were highly interconnected; moreover, both Councils shared most of the experts. That could be one of reasons for an integration of two bodies into one.

In general, gender-based violence is named as one of the main indicators of gender inequality. It is recognized by the authorities that girls and women could become victims of sexual harassment

at work, of rape, or of forced sexual exploitation. A factor, which plays a big role in the latter, is human trafficking, which is an extremely gendered issue. Moreover, a problem of domestic violence is arisen; victims of such could be mostly women and children. The absence of official statistics about gender-based violence makes it difficult to evaluate this phenomenon; however, it is emphasized that the problem is quite significant in the Russian society.

There are several methods listed as preferable for counteracting gender-based violence. First, they include improving legislation in order to fight with domestic violence and support rights of victims of violence. There have been several attempts to reach the federal authorities with proposals on improvement of legislation for counteracting gender-based violence. Specifically, the Council decided to address members of the State Duma; the appeal included, first, the call for changing the legislation of the Russian Federation according to the recommendation of the United Nations about domestic violence. Furthermore, the experts of the Council offered to pass the federal law for counteracting domestic violence. Another move that the authorities in St Petersburg see important to achieve is a ratification of Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Finally, they have proposed the set of changes into the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation related to the violence towards children and elder people in families.

However, even though such method is recognized almost in every document by the relevant bodies in St Petersburg, there has been much progress done in this regard; moreover, some laws that have been passed at the federal level are of the opposite nature (for, example, the one that reduces punishment for domestic batter). This fact also justifies the conclusion that domestication of many gender-equality ideas takes place regionally; thus, even though the authorities in St Petersburg recognize the need for specific legislation for counteracting gender-based violence, the federal agenda does not appear to be supportive for such methods.

Another important field of work is raising awareness among population about the problem of gender-based violence. It includes both propaganda of non-violent social behaviour and legal competencies related to crimes of violence. Moreover, it is emphasized that it is important to increase knowledge on prevention of violence and on supportive work with victims of violence for all relevant bodies: police, social services, governmental authorities. In order to achieve these results, the intersectional work between various governmental and non-governmental institutions is needed. In St Petersburg, there is a state Crisis Centre for women, who have experienced domestic violence. Such centres are common institutions across Europe; such support and rehabilitation for victims seem extremely important while fighting with consequences of gender-

based violence. However, there is a demand for more of crisis centres since the places are not enough to provide help for all women in need.

5.4.4 Other Health-Related Issues: Gendered Approach

Apart from tackling the issue of gender-based violence, the authorities in St Petersburg put a big emphasis on other issues related to health. First, it should be noticed that equal access to health services and well-being is considered to be as one of the main factors for achieving gender equality by the Nordic partners as well. Here there will be a discussion on the fact how this issue is tackled by the Russian authorities in St Petersburg.

The authorities are concerned about the overall decrease of potential for well-being among both genders: low birth rates and high mortality rates, lack of motivation for a healthy way of life among population, deficiency of opportunities for professional medical care due to commercialization of health care. While considering the policies for improving the situation in this regard, the Russian authorities are mostly guided by the peculiarities of the Russian context since it is quite specific. As it has been noticed in the theoretical part of this research about the Russian context, Russia is characterized by a very high mortality rate among male population. It is also underlined by the authorities in St Petersburg as one of the gender-based factors, which influences a process of creating and implementing various policies. The reasons for very low life expectancy of male population are named as follows: a low level of self-care, hard and unhealthy conditions at work, alcoholism and smoking habits, aggressiveness, involvement into criminal activities.

Nevertheless, according to the documents, access to a health system is seen to be more important for women rather than for men. It is justified by several reasons. First, it is connected to the issue of the reproductive health of women. Moreover, women much more often become subjects to poverty; it is linked to a phenomenon of ‘feminization of poverty’. Additionally, it is recognized that women to much greater extent take care of other elder or sick members of families. However, while working with women’s issues, it is the reproductive health, which is paid with much attention. The authorities are concerned with the fact that abortions continue to be one of the most popular ways for contraception. Moreover, there is an increase in chances of getting HIV/AIDS. In order to improve a reproductive health of women, the consultation centres for mostly young women have been established. These centres provide consultations on different related topics in order to prevent sexually transmitted diseases with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. Moreover, there is a Centre for Planned Parenthood working in St Petersburg. Both types of institutions listed above are open for both young women and men; however, it should be

said that a great emphasis is put on women. It partly means that a responsibility for family and children related issues still lies on women to a great degree.

For now, it has been concluded that a gender perspective has not been satisfactorily included into a health system. In order to counteract those challenges, which exist in the society in terms of health of men and women, the authorities try to, first, popularize the idea of a healthy lifestyle among population through means of media and social campaigns. In general, it is underlined that sex education is extremely important in this regard; however, the existing programmes are highly limited and often face counteraction by different social groups, which see them as ‘corrupting’. Moreover, while fighting so-called asocial behaviour, which includes alcoholism, drug addiction, etc, a gender perspective is needed in practice since these health-related issue is highly gendered.

However, one important factor in terms of health care should be emphasized here. The authorities give much effort to introduce a gendered approach while dealing with health-related issues. This area is highly gender-dependent since there is an objective need for considering biological differences between genders. Notwithstanding, the primary goal for introducing a gender perspective here is for improving the demographic situation in the city rather than an idea of gender equality per se. It can be concluded that one of the main goals of such policies is to increase the birth rate and lower the mortality rate: the demographic crisis has been at the main agenda in Russia for several years now.

5.4.5 Supporting Motherhood

In the Russian context, increasing demographic rates plays a very important role in a political sense. Thus, one of the processes that gets considerable support is motherhood. It is important to emphasize here that such policies are primarily aimed at women: they are still considered to be responsible for family and childbirth issue. There are some shifts in order to attract men to more participation in the family issues; however, such calls are mostly declarative in nature. Meanwhile, there are special strategies and policies implemented specifically for women to support them during the process of child-bearing.

Apart from paying attention to some medical issues related to pregnancy, giving birth and taking care of children, there are also some social economic problems, which women face while raising small children. It mostly concerns labour rights. Once again, the Constitution of the Russian Federation guarantees equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for their realization; however, as the authorities of St Petersburg emphasize, there is a big issue of discrimination of

women at labour market, which includes unequal possibilities for employment, unequal and unjust pay for equivalent labour, and in general, absence of social guarantees in order to successfully combine work at the labour market and motherhood. Thus, one of the priorities in gender policies is protection of labour rights of women. For now, the legal mechanisms do not include the group of working mothers and provide them with a legal framework for their support and protection from discrimination. There were several examinations taken place in order to determine such areas of discrimination. According to the document (Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg, n.d. c), they include violation of terms for paying an allowance for a maternity and sick leave. It is important to emphasize that such an allowance is solely aimed at mothers, which also shows that fatherhood is for now excluded from the social benefits. Another important issue is that women are often forced to quit their workplace if being pregnant. Moreover, the Russian legislation has both a list of forbidden occupations and work conditions for women; there has not been an issue arisen about eliminating such lists. On the contrary, the authorities underline that such legislation is not performed by employees, which needs to be taken into consideration. In order to improve the situation in this regard, the authorities arranged various measures.

First, it is seen very important to work directly with population, including women and employees. There is hotline and other consultation spaces for women with children under 3 years old where they can talk to an expert. Apart from that, a specific information sheet is published with answers for most frequently asked questions at the hotline.

Moreover, in order to work further on proposals and legislation for improving realization of labour rights for women, an interdepartmental work group was established; it includes the State Labour Inspectorate, the Prosecutor's Office in St Petersburg, the Social Insurance Fund, the Committee for Issues of Legitimacy and Security in St Petersburg, and the NGO for assistance with social benefits for citizens in St Petersburg. They consider issues of compliance with legislation towards pregnant women and women with children and make further proposals for improvement of a position of this social group.

Furthermore, it is specified that pregnant women and women with children constitute the most vulnerable group since their financial and psychological resources needed for protection of their rights could be quite limited. Therefore, it is important to support this social group with various social benefits. It has been decided to include pregnant women and women with children younger than 3 years old into the programme, which offers free legal assistance by lawyers; women can consult this service to protect their labour rights.

There have been made various proposals related to changing the legislation in different of its parts in order to ensure more stable women's position at the labour market when reconciling family and work. In principle, such policies underpin quite similar approach as it is understood in the Nordic countries; however, apart from protection of labour rights of women, the Nordic states pursue a policy of equal share of responsibilities in families and promote the idea of parental and sick leaves for fathers. For now, this issue has not been undertaken by the Russian authorities. On the opposite, much policies make their goal to tackle only women's issues while raising children. It is declared that it could be important to attract men into family issues; however, it is women in an absolute majority of families who take care of children. Moreover, there is a high percent of single parent families (mostly, only with mothers). Thus, much work seems to be needed to popularize such family structure before introducing some changes in the legislation.

Apart from working with legal mechanisms for protection of labour rights of women with children, there are other tools for achieving this goal. In general, they all represent various kinds of social benefits and improving social institutions, which are of help in a process of raising children. First, there is a programme in St Petersburg, which is aimed at higher accessibility of pre-school institutions; they significantly vary in their formats. The goals here is to offer different options for women, which they would be able to choose from and have an access to such institutions. It surely increases chances of women to quickly return to their professional activities; at least, such institutions give an opportunity for women with small children to work part-time and fulfill their professional and financial ambitions. Such institutions include both the state and private ones; however, the authorities sometimes play an important role in stimulating creation of even non-state pre-school institutions for children in order to meet female population's needs.

In general, the authorities of St Petersburg underline the importance of existence different types of work times for women with underage children. Part time jobs are one options; others might include working at home, flexible shifts, not full working week, etc. The responsible body here is the official Employment service. Additionally, it would be of great help and support for parents with many children or with children of limited opportunities. The Employment service of St Petersburg often organizes public events in order to promote such opportunities among population and reach target groups with this information. Popularization of different work opportunities for women takes place through different media, including, for example, newspapers and TV channels of St Petersburg.

Moreover, nowadays, women are very active in creating small businesses. The authorities underline a need for supporting such initiatives; it develops economy, helps women to get a financial independence, and thus, contributed to gender equality. Therefore, the Employment

service of St Petersburg makes consultations for those women interested in leading such businesses, give any possible support and knowledge. Additionally, there is a regional programme, which gives funding for those, who would like to start their own business and come from economically vulnerable groups. However, it is important to mention here that those areas, which women open their business in, are considered to be mostly female: they include sales, fashion and beauty salons, medical issues. Thus, there are no efforts for now to break segregation between female and male fields of occupation as it is declared in the Nordic countries.

However, it is important to realize that women anyways would stay at home at parental leave; this period could vary but it is still there. During the time while women are absent from labour market, their qualification decreases. Therefore, it is crucial for women while taking a parental leave to keep their competencies up to date. There is a specific state service aimed at this: women could choose from different programmes in order to change their field of work or get new competencies in the old one.

To conclude, the state bodies in St Petersburg have been implementing various policies and programmes in order to support pregnant women and women with kids; it includes a gender perspective at a health system, at labour market, at families. Most of them have the same meaning as gender-equality policies in the Nordic countries; thus, equal access to health care, reconciliation of family work and financial independence of women are named as cornerstones of gender equality in a society. However, first, such policies consider peculiarities of the Russian context: existence of a considerable amount of single parent families (mostly, only with mothers), of financial support for mothers with small children due to the lack of participation of fathers in the family issues, violation of labour rights of pregnant women and women with children. However, any policies, which would include male population into care activities in families, are not present; such policies are of great importance for the Nordic countries. Therefore, women keep to play an important role as mothers, this is seen as their biological duty.

5.4.6 Knowledge-Based Policies

The Nordic countries have repeatedly emphasized that research on gender issues is needed in order to provide adequate policies. This tool is implemented by the Russian authorities as well. Throughout this chapter, it has been continuously underlined that governmental bodies included in the work on gender issues in St Petersburg put a special emphasis on doing analytical work in relevant fields. Thus, it concerns medical care and a health system, cases of gender-based violence. Moreover,

In order to make various research, the authorities of St Petersburg implement different tools. First, they coordinate their expertise among different departments, which might possess valuable information in their field. Second, they invite non-governmental organizations for collaboration: they often have reality-based facts due to making activities directly among population and target groups. The Coordination Council for Issues of Equality between Men and Women and Prevention of Violence in St Petersburg is a great example of such expertise institution since it constitutes of members from different background.

Apart from expertise of relevant bodies, specific research on different important topics has been made. For example, in 2014, an analytical institution performed a research about social-economic position of women and social well-being of women raising children with disabilities. In 2016, a big research on overall position of women in St Petersburg has been introduced (Stellit, 2016). It has been done with help of funding from the Committee for Social Policies of St Petersburg. Some of its provisions have been mentioned while discussing the Russian context in relation to gender issues in the theoretical part of this research. Overall, it describes the position of women in Russia in comparison with the international context and then the position of women in St Petersburg in comparison with the Russian context. The research underlines areas of violations of women's rights in the Russian and, specifically, St Petersburg's contexts. Moreover, the research discusses peculiarities of violation of rights of different vulnerable groups; these violations, generally, are based on discrimination and concern women of two big social groups: first, women with non-heteronormative sexuality and transwomen, and second, women with illegal migration background. It will be discussed further how important such issues of intersectionality are seen by the feminist activists involved in the "Eve's Ribs" project. Even though this research discusses these issues of intersectionality, there have not been any policies or practical measures yet done in this regard.

5.4.7 Failed Domestication: Decision Making

Above, there has been a discussion of all the issues that are named as important by the authorities of St Petersburg in relations for gender equality and are put into practices by various policies, programmes, and other measures. However, the fact that the project for the Concept for Gender Policies has not been passed underlines that those offers, which have been proposed there and have not been implemented by other legislation and programmes, are not possible to domesticate into the Russian context at least at this stage.

For now, there have not been any reports about improving women's positions in the decision-making processes. Since the society is highly self-regulated by existing gender stereotypes, there are not so many women at high positions in economics or politics; the same goes with the field of scientific research. Another problematic issue, which was named in the Concept for Gender Policies, is the fact that numbers of women in the local Parliament and administration continue to be rather low: in St Petersburg, it varies from 20 to 30 per cent. The situation in economic is worst: the women's representation in running organizations and businesses is not higher than 10 per cent. On the contrary, women are presented to a great extent at lower, operative layers in hierarchies. Another field of consideration is the fact that women's salaries constitute about 70% of ones of men's for the equal amount of work and competencies.

In order to improve these issues and make women's representation and labour more equal, there were several measures offered in the Concept for Gender Policies. First, there was a proposition to work with legislation: thus, all the laws should be analyzed with the perspective of gender equality. Another important tool named here is gender mainstreaming; including a gender perspective into all levels of governing was one of the proposals. Moreover, support for women preparing for or participating in elections was mentioned. One of the long-standing goals was adopting a regional general law of gender equality in St Petersburg by 2015; however, this measure has not been into practice.

6. THE EVE'S RIB'S PROJECT: ACTIVIST LEVEL OF DOMESTICATION

6.1 Introducing the Case

“Eve’s Ribs” represents an educational and artistic project. Its goal is to continue discussion of gender inequality in the society. Therefore, they try to talk about discrimination towards women and make the society in general to reflect on this issue. The participants take part in seminars, master classes and trainings in order to learn how to make their voices heard. One of the most prominent method at this project is art; this includes documentaries, theatre, various types of performances. The project has started in 2015; after receiving a funding, they began their activities in the beginning of 2016. The first stage of work represented a selection process for the different groups mostly from Russia and Finland (however, groups from post-Soviet spaces are also welcome); after the selection process, groups came together in St Petersburg in March, 2016 in order to participate in the educational part of the project. There, they exchanged different ideas and learnt from contexts of each other, participated in the trainings, developed the framework for the future. The second stage was about doing activities at their ow federal subjects. The final part of that process was making a mutual festival where activists present their work: plays, video works and performances. Based on this, different meetings are organized in order to openly discuss the issues of gender inequality with the society. Different groups visited the festival: apart from St Petersburg activists, who at the same time organize the event, there were activist groups from Moscow, Samara, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, Tyumen. The Finnish participants included some independent individuals, who worked together on a play about gender-based violence, the “FemAct” organization, representatives of “Monika Naiset” and “Naisten Linja” organizations. Apart from that, several lectures by some Russian and Finnish experts were organized. The festival took place in St Petersburg on June 10-13, 2016. Thus, the first round of the project has ended; however, the activists continued to collaborate. The second round of the project with the same outline has started in the beginning of 2017. (About Us, n.d.)

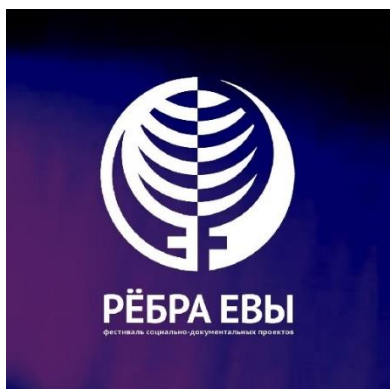


PHOTO 1. Logo of the project.



PHOTO 2. The second day of the festival.

6.2 Attitudes of Russian Activists towards Nordic Gender Norms

The overall impression by those Russian groups, who are actively involved in work against gender inequality, towards gender norms, which exist in Nordic countries, seems important to analyze since it gives the primary understanding for further analysis of cooperation between them and the Nordic groups. This part both considers perceptions of the Nordic countries, specifically, how the Russian activists talk about the Nordic gender initiatives, which has been implemented by the states. Additionally, here are some conclusions on how the whole situation in Nordic society is seen in the public level in comparison to the Russian one. Finally, it should be noticed that these attitudes have a great influence how groups collaborate in the international projects and how they would domesticate further ideas while working together.

6.2.1 State Level

The attitudes towards Nordic state policies in the terms of gender equality are mostly positive. The policies that have been implemented by the governments are evaluated as ones, which actively deal with the problems of inequality in society. The activists emphasize that it is extremely important how the official discourse by the states represents such issues.

First, such discourse by the states initiates free discussions about gender inequality and leads to active work by different organizations. What seems extremely valuable is the fact that such active organizations and groups are successfully integrated into society; they have a possibility to have an influence on processes and discussions. Thus, one of the participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” festival claims:

A: Surely, they [organizations] are included in society; they have been there, and been active, for a long time now. The state naturally does something for that to be taking place.³

Therefore, the states have had great impact on succeeding in building more equal societies. It has led to the fact that there are much more organizations and groups operating with equality agenda which exist in Nordic countries than in Russia; civil society generally feels more support or, at least, freedom and non-resistance in tackling issues of inequality. Another positive factor of the state support is financing: thus, the governments not only give a freedom for such feminist work in society and declares the equality discourse, but also provides different financing opportunities for Nordic activists and service organizations.

³ “Oni, poniatnoe delo, vklucheny v obshchestvo, oni uzhe davno tam sushchestvuiut, obitauiut. Gosudarstvo, estestvenno, chto-to delaet v ètom napravlenii.”

Apart from being supportive towards equality discourse and initiatives in Nordic countries, these states have been successfully performing on building the welfare system. Such system with social protection of different groups, including women, is seen as the most successful one while fighting inequality. Generally, the left-wing socialist system is evaluated as the ideal one; the Nordic model then is the closest to the ideal. Thus, the big advantage of the Nordic states are exactly their social friendly policies and benefits in order to create more equal society.

Considering positively the measures supporting the equal social system in Nordic countries, additionally, activists point out the importance of women's representation in politics. However, it should be specified that the representation itself is not a goal; the goal would be to have a balanced government and parliament where women would start to lobby their own interests, which would end in adapting different spheres of life towards more 'equality inclusive' operation. The number of 30 per cent of women is mentioned; it is said that before that point women in the political institutions continue to support the existing discourse and cannot influence the decision-making process towards a women-friendly agenda. That is how one of the feminist activists responds to this problem:

B: Actually, there is such practice, which exists and, surely, works, that for women being able to change anything in a country, there should be at least 30 per cent of them in power. If the number is smaller, they work in defense of patriarchal discourse. If the number is smaller, they do not defend their interests, and men dominate.⁴

Thus, women's representation in politics is openly named as a method to bring more feminist-friendly agenda to the society and achieve social benefits for women and men that would lead to economic and representational equality in families, workplaces, academia. Finland, for example, is named as a country with very strong laws against gender inequality, and gendered violence, particularly. In order for a country to achieve such success in the legal system, which would protect different vulnerable groups, representation in decision-making processes plays a great role. Therefore, quotas seem as a very positive and helpful method to achieve such balanced representation. Moreover, quotas are needed not only in the political parties but can be also used as a method for equal representation in other spheres, for example, academia, in order to break the tendency of "male" and "female" fields of professional occupation.

Even though there are much work that has been done by the states towards gender equal society, the activists put an emphasis on the processes of rising conservative and right-wing movements

⁴ "Voobshche zdes' rabotaet takaia praktika, chto dlia togo, chtoby zhenshchiny mogli izmenit' chto-to v strane, vo vlasti dolzhno byt' ne men'she 30 protsentov. esli ikh men'she, oni rabotaiut na patriarkhal'nyi diskurs. Esli men'she, oni ne zashchishchaiut svoi interesy, i muzhchiny ikh zadavlivaiut."

and ideas in Europe and, particularly, in Nordic states. There have been some measures implemented recently that decreases the social finance support and would target women's position in the long-term perspective. The Russian activists argue that such tendencies should be opposed; however, it seems that such tendencies do not look too serious for them and seem natural for the historic process.

6.2.2 Public Level

Even though people, who are actively involved in the agenda of promoting gender equality and feminist ideas, in Russia hugely support the initiatives, which take place in the Nordic countries, the perception of the situation around ordinary citizens of those societies is quite different.

The Russian activists share the idea that there is an image of the Nordic countries as ones, which have achieved considerable progress in building gender equal society. Society generally shares the common liberal discourse; as mentioned above, it is seen as a consequence of the long work by different organizations and groups with the support by the state within the political conditions for more open atmosphere for discussions. Then, the social benefits, for example, the parental leave for both parents, is perceived very positively. That is how this situation in Finland describes one of the Russian activists:

B: Men take the parental leave; men sit with their children. The last time we went to Finland [...], we were surprised how many men with one or two children have been there while mothers, apparently, work or have a rest.⁵

Such positive approach is explained that this kind of family structure plays a great role in achieving gender equality; family relations like that would also lead to decreasing women's economic dependence and, therefore, gendered violence.

Moreover, they underline the importance of education and enlightenment in the field of inequalities and notice that the situation is relatively better in the Nordic countries. However, despite all the knowledge, which has been circulated among people, the scale of gender inequality, especially, concerning gendered violence, is still big. Moreover, it comes as a surprise in many cases. As noticed above, the Nordic countries are perceived as ones having achieved considerable progress in the field of gender equality; it leads to the fact that people, even those, who have been

⁵ "I muzhchiny berut dekretnyĭ otpusk, i muzhchiny sidiat s det'mi. Posledniĭ raz, kogda my poshli tuda [...], byli udivleny, chto kucha muzhchin s malen'kimi det'mi, s odnim, s dvumia, prishli ètikh detei razvlekat', mamy gde-to rabotaet ili otdykhaet."

interested in this topic, are not aware with the scale of existing problems concerning gendered-based violence in the Nordic countries.

Therefore, there are controversial beliefs. On the one hand, there is an opinion that people's beliefs in different contexts (including the pair of Russian and Nordic) could be the same if they considered it from the starting points. The bigger difference is about approaches towards the equality agenda by governmental officials and decision-makers. It makes situations and contexts different; however, the overall situation among members of society themselves cannot be called that much progressive. One of the organizers of the "Eve's Ribs festival" claims:

B: I thought that it was so bad in Russia and so good in Finland. But the performance that they have shown [at the festival], including, statistics which show a colossal level of domestic violence and, generally, violence against women in comparison to the European one. We have the same problems in this case.⁶

The level of sharing the equality ideas could be the same among population in Russia if there were the same liberal discourse by the government.

At the same time, activists express the views that Russia is a very patriarchal society, which makes it more difficult to spread those ideas here and make any changes. Despite this paradox, there is a unanimous belief that even if there are some similar problems in both countries, the states' approaches are extremely different. It then leads to the idea of building solidarity among activists while using different methods and being sensitive to local contexts.

6.3 Building Solidarity Among Borders

6.3.1 Global Problems – Global Work

Working internationally on the problems of inequality seems to be very important for the participants of the project. The organizers of the festival underline that problems of gender inequality are universal as well as problems of other vulnerable groups, who experience discrimination at different levels; such groups are, for example, poor people, LGBTQ people, colour people, etc. Therefore, there is a belief that this problem should be tackled on the international level; the project then is not only for some local contexts. As it has been stated as some of the perspectives for the project:

⁶"ІА думала, што ў нас у Расіі плачу, а ў Фінляндыі ўсё добра. Не спектакль, які яны прывезлі, у тым ліку, статыстычныя даныя, якія паказваюць колосальны ўзровень домашняга насілля і ў прынцыпе насілля ў адносінах жанчын па параўнанні з еўрапейскім. У нас сапраўды аднаковыя праблемы ў даным вопысе."

To keep the international status for the festival; to engage participants from other countries; [...]. To keep in mind a possibility to organize [the festival] [...] in different countries, to share experience, to make joint projects on specific topics among regions as well as among countries since the problems are universal.

There are several advantages of doing such projects and dealing with issues of gender inequality in the international context, which have been indicated by those involved in such work. First, it underlines the existence of common problems and common agenda, which are shared among people from different contexts. Therefore, sharing information among is important for activists. It increases the understanding of the global tendencies, on the one hand, and their local peculiarities, on the other. The participants themselves express hope that such learning process will be even richer in the future: the dialogue among contexts will be helpful because the scenes in Russia and Finland are very different while, at the same time, having a lot of commonalities. People from different backgrounds have a value of their own unique experience that should be shared among others.

Second, it helps to build such activities in a strategic way. Since the situations in different contexts have many similarities, and the activists often perceive the same goals, it is important to work together in the long-term perspective. Doing activism, which is separate from other groups with the same agenda, is much less productive while fighting inequality in society. Such work is evaluated as more sufficient when it is coordinated among different contexts. The scales of the problem of gender inequality is huge; there are many situations leading to gender discrimination in the end that could be seen and analyzed properly only from the level of global perspective.

Such connections among activists from different contexts, which include the process of crossing not only international borders but the regional ones inside one country as well, highly increase the motivation of the people involved in the activist work. As one of the participants of the festival claims:

C: Surely, it [the festival] helped very much to meet each other and see that we are not alone and we are altogether while being in different places: from Helsinki to Kazakhstan. We all try to create something.⁷

Thinking about issues of gender equality in the global terms diversifies the activities of local groups and helps to compare own experiences with what have been done by others. Doing more efficient work in fighting inequality comes from understanding of the global situation; it increases

⁷ "Konechno, èto ochen' pomoglo, vo-pervykh, vsem poznakomit'sia i uvidet', chto my ne odni i my vmeste seichas v raznykh mestakh: ot Xel'sinki do Kazakhstana. My vse staraemsia kak-to chto-to sozdat'."

the quality of the feminist field work. Therefore, it all leads to the fact there is a belief that it is highly needed for improving methods and goals of activism on the local level.

6.3.2 “We Are All Equal”: Expertise in Activism

The way of communication among feminist activist groups, which has been discussed above, leads to the fact that participants are seen as equals in their experiences and knowledge. Since activists acknowledge the existence of the same patterned problems among different contexts, they also value equally the work of each other.

However, it should be noticed that activists easily recognize that some of them could hold some expert knowledge if a person has been working on some issue or has a unique background. Therefore, even here the cultural background of a person intersects with her professional experience and other variables. What is the most important conclusion, which could be drawn from every interview, is that a learning process appears to be mutually beneficial: there is no attitude for the Nordic activists to be “higher” in the hierarchy acting like teachers in the project, or their knowledge to be more important. Here is the quote by one of the participants of the festival:

C: In this project, I could see that all the participants are equal. Of course, if we invite some expert, who has been dealing with some problem for twenty or thirty years, s/he can tell a lot about what the Russian partner [of the festival] would not know. But the same goes with some expert from Russia being able to tell something that would make a Finnish colleague to look at the same issues from a different perspective. But even if we go to the level of ordinary participants [of the project], I think there is the never-ending learning process about each other. ... from our side everyone is open and want to participate in this project precisely because they want to learn from each other about ourselves, about others, about society, about how to live with that and how to influence that.⁸

Therefore, this learning process seems to be beneficial for all the parties of communication. Moreover, the Russian participants indicate that the quality of their activism is relatively high: which methods they use, how they tackle the problems. Since the political contexts are different, Russian feminist groups become almost the only agents in Russia operating in defense of the

⁸ “Konkretno v ètom proekte ia vizhu tak, chto vse uchastniki ravnotsenno. Konechno, esli priglasit’ èksperta, kotoryi zanimaetsia ètim dvadtsat’-tridtsat’ let, on mozhet mnogo chego rasskazat’, chego ne budet znat’ rossiiskii partner. No takzhe kakoï-nibud’ èkspert iz Rossii mozhet rasskazat’ takoe, chto zastavit vzglianut’ finskuiu kollegu na te zhe samye voprosy absoljutno v novoï perspektive. A esli dazhe ukhodit’ s urovnia èkspertov i èkspertok i perekhodit’ na uroven’ prosto uchastnits, to mne kazhetsia, tut èto prosto beskonechnoe uchenie drug o druge. Pri ètom chem otkrytee budut sotrudnichaiushchie storony, tem bol’shemu oni smogut drug u druga nauchit’sia. Po kraïnei mere, s nashei storony absoljutno vse otkryty i khotiat uchastvovat’ v ètom proekte imenno potomu chto khotiat chemu-to novomu nauchit’sia drug u druga, o sebe, o drugikh, ob obshchestve, o tom, kak s ètim zhit’, kak na èto vliiat’.”

gender equality agenda. This fact increases the level of activism since they must work both theoretically and practically; such work in many ways appears to be more radical and sometimes innovative. At the same time, it is recognized that the Finnish participants have their own unique experience of having been doing work for a long time and implementing successfully working mechanisms. That creates the space for mutual exchange of experiences and highly influences the ways knowledge is domesticated into the Russian context.

6.4 Domestication: How, What, Why

6.4.1 Importance of the Local

Talking about the ways and levels of communication that was presented above seems important since it explains how the further domestication of knowledge works in the framework of this festival and how such collaboration could work among different activists in general. What have been already indicated several times while describing the solidarity work among activists is the importance of the local context. This topic has been hugely present in the interviews; it seems that the way for structuring activism can be mostly explained with the importance of the local context for activists. Another important conclusion is that a local context is not seen as the *national* but the *regional*.

First, the simplest reason for indicating the necessity for working in own local context is a language. Sharing one language of communication is important for activists. Exactly because of this, some feminist activists, and other human rights activists, expand the field of close joint work and solidarity to post-Soviet states as well; Russian appears to be a binding factor for in-depth joint activities.

Second, as it has been mentioned above, working internationally and discussing the issues of inequality with activists from other countries helps to build a better understanding of one's own local context in comparison to global trends. Thus, problems are seen universal; it is important to analyze in a bigger perspective; nevertheless, the local contexts hold some peculiarities, which can be existing only in particular space (geographical or contextual). That is why here contexts are perceived in the regional level; Russia is a big country with rather different legal, cultural and discursive situations.

Third, the activists from the Samara region, who have been taking part in the project of the "Eve's Ribs" festival, talk about other moment regarding importance of the local context. Those experience and knowledge that they receive while working in their region of residence give them

more benefits than ones, which have been uphold during the festival. The international work is valued for the same reasons described above; however, performing activities at home and receiving feedback from other citizens about specific problems of those communities give them more in-depth insights, which they are grateful to obtain and analyze further.

Other participants express the same opinion. The festival is not seen as a goal itself. Here could be a parallel to women's representation in politics when this is seen only as a method for improving a situation in society. The same goes with the festival goals. The international collaboration is needed for exchanging ideas, underlying the same problems, elaborating on the tools for working further; however, the goal of such collaboration is to improve situations in the local contexts, starting with the regional level. One of the participants of the festival claims:

C: It is more important what happens apart from the festival. Because this projects exists, people from Helsinki or from St Petersburg know what happens in Kazakhstan. And this is a good example why it is important, why it is needed. Even if there was not further financing to hold the event in St Petersburg, it won't mean that the movement should stop. It should continue locally.⁹

6.4.2 Problems and Focuses: Same or Different?

As it was analyzed above, the activists indicate that they share some common problems, which appear to exist across contexts. At the same time, they recognize the importance of their local context. It means that despite naming the same problems, they could underline various specific factors applying to this problem in a specific context; therefore, they would also implement methods for activism in order to try to deal with these problems accordingly. This part of the analyzes which common problems they indicate first and whether there are different perspectives to look at a problem. Methods for dealing with those issues will be analyzed in the next part.

6.4.3 Gendered Violence

During the festival and the whole project of the "Eve's Ribs", gendered violence has been one of the key topic for collaboration and discussions among groups; there were lectures by women who work in crisis centres in Finland, by a lawyer who work with the cases of domestic violence in

⁹ "Namnogo vazhnee to, chto proiskhodit pomimo festivalia. Seichas blagodaria tomu, chto sushchestvuet etot proekt, uzhe nekotorye liudi, kotorye vot v Xel'sinki, k primeru, ili v Peterburge, uznaiut o tom, chto proiskhodit v Kazakhstane. I eto uzhe po-moemu ochen' khoroshii primer togo, pochemu eto vazhno, pochemu eto nuzhno. Esli dazhe ne budet finansirovaniia na to, chtoby provodit' obshchee meropriatie v Peterburge, eto ne oznachaet, chto dvizhenie dolzhno ostanovit'sia. Prodolzhat'sia dal'she lokal'no."

Russia; there were also plays, which had been prepared by both Russian and Finnish participants of the festival. Why has the festival been so gendered violence based?

There seem to be different reasons for choosing this topic as the key one. First, as the organizers of the festival indicate, the more emergency the problems seem to be, the more important they are for people. Therefore, the issues, which have a close relation to personal physical and psychological safety, need to be approached in the first place:

D: Well, here it is the same as everywhere. For example, there are different problems migrants can experience: some of them are killed, some of them are denied with a workplace. It is the same here [with gender equality].¹⁰

However, the organizers specify that the problems are hard to be ranked. Therefore, they often work with other issues as well as there are participants addressing other issues of gender inequality; however, they put a special emphasis on the problems of violence.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the factor of personalization played a big role during the festival. Even though other participants are free to approach various problems of gender inequality, the festival has been gendered violence based since it is the main topic of activism for the Russian organizers. As one of the Finnish organizers specifies:

E: It [gendered violence] is the focus of the [one of the Russian organizers'] activism. [...] Their [of the Russian activists] activism was so gendered violence based that it also had an influence on the festival's overall focus.

Therefore, it could be seen that the focus of the festival has been set by the Russian participants; the Finnish ones "approved" the idea and started to elaborate on the topic of violence as well:

G: I have joined the project when I understood that statistics of domestic and sexual violence towards women is just going off-scale in Finland in comparison to other indexes in the EU. This problem has not been solved not only in Russia but also here where the situation around human rights would seem better.¹¹

Apparently, the topic of gendered violence has not been hugely present in the Finnish discourse for a while (besides related to the migration crisis, which will be discussed further); this is very

¹⁰ "Nu est' prosto, kak i vezde, nu naprimer, raznye problemy diskriminatsii migrantov: kogo-to ubivaiut, a komu-to prosto otkazyvaiut v rabochem meste. Nu i tut tozhe samoe."

¹¹ "IA prisoedinilas' k proektu, kogda poniala, chto statistika domashnego i seksual'nogo nasiliia v otnoshenii zhenshchin prosto zashkalivaet v Finliandii po sravneniiu s ostal'nymi pokazateliami v ES. Eto problemu poka ne reshili ne tol'ko v Rossii, no i zdes', gde, kazalos' by, situatsiia s pravami cheloveka namnogo luchshe."

different from the Russian context where the issues of violence has been recently discussed to the extent, which had not been there before.

However, the Finnish participants, who are not always the activists but people interested in the agenda, found it surprising that the figures for gendered violence in Finland are quite high:

C: I looked into statistics and got terrified: how is it possible that prosperous Finland has these figures?!¹²

Therefore, the problem of gendered violence seems essential for both countries; moreover, it almost has the same scale in Russia and Finland. Apparently, it could be almost the only problem, which brings the participants from different contexts to the same ground, thereby, it is easier to discuss and elaborate on. This conclusion had been further indicated by other participants. It becomes another reason that the project had successfully introduced collaboration among Finnish and Russian activists on this topic.

Generally, the problem of gendered violence carries the same understanding across different contexts. Other problems could be highly attached, and related to, political and economic situation and, therefore, have more peculiarities considering methods to deal with the problems. Gendered violence though seems to hold identical connotations:

C: It does not matter where violence is taking place; it is still violence. We just try to work with that, work with society.¹³

The deeper reasons for existence of violence in society have not been much analyzed by the activists; the focus was on dealing with consequences and insisting on building the spaces for discussing these issues. However, one of the participants, who has been involved in studying gender equality and feminism in both countries, indicated alike reasons for spreading violence behaviour across contexts:

E: We [Finland and Russia] have this gender violence [problem], which has a lot to do with masculinity, this image how masculinity has to be [performed] and how it [the image of masculinity] is quite narrow... I think it has an influence on the fact that men are aggressive, or some people are aggressive.

Another activist from Russia articulates another assumptions for practical causes of domestic violence against women:

¹² “IA vzjala statistiku i sama uzhasnulas’: kak tak, v blagopoluchnoi Finliandii takie tsifry.”

¹³ “kotoroe vne zavisimosti ot togo, gde ono proiskhodit, ono vse ravno nasilie, a my pytaemsia lish’ s etim rabotat’, rabotat’ s obshchestvom.”

B: Unfortunately, there is the same statistics around the world: gap in salaries [between women and men] and the fact of women being attached to the housework have a direct implication on the scale of domestic violence. Because the bigger amount of cases of domestic violence takes places not in the moment when a woman meets a man but when she becomes economically dependent on him. More than in 40% of cases take place when either she is pregnant or she breast-feeds.¹⁴

However, this correlation of domestic violence and economic dependence could not be applied to Finland to the same degree as it could be done in Russia. The activist herself has stated that Finnish, and Nordic, men are considerably more involved in the family building process than in Russia. In fact, policies, for example, ones having been implemented in the Nordic countries considering the parental leave for both parents, target the issues of gender equality in families and decrease the chance for a woman to be critically dependent on a man.

Coming back to the issue of men being aggressive, there is another difference, which considers understanding the issue of violence in society. The Finnish activists and, according to their data presented at the festival, other members of the Finnish society put a big emphasis on the image of masculinity and aggressive patterns, which exist there because of perceptions about genders. Therefore, they admit that men quite often suffer from violence abuse performed by other men. People, including activists, from Finland indicate that the society and the state do not consider gendered violence against men as a big problem as it should be. However, the work in this direction, at least, at the discursive level has been started.

The Russian participants and, generally, feminist activists do not seem to be ready to talk about the consequences for men to adjust their behaviour to existing gendered matrix of reality. Although the feminist activists have done some performances against the idea of representation of men as defenders of the country and the “use” of men in the military conflicts. Additionally, one of the organizers has told in one of the interviews that since their activities are directed to reconsidering gender norms, thus, they are also liberating for men in the end. However, when it comes to the gendered violence, the Russian activists are highly sensitive to the fact of emphasizing violence towards men since there is a belief that women’s agenda has been silenced for such a long time; therefore, there should be a higher priority to help women to build such safe spaces. The reason for such different perceptions towards the issue of gendered violence against men could be understood with the timeframe of existing feminist movements in Russia and the Nordic countries.

¹⁴ “I k sozhaleniiu, èta statistika est’ vo vsem mire: mezhdu vot ètim razryvom v zarplate i priviazannosti zhenshchin k domu i kolichestvu sluchaev domashnego nasiliia sushchestvuet priamaia sviaz’. Potomu chto bol’shaia chast’ sluchaev domashnego nasiliia proiskhodit ne togda, kogda zhenshchina znakomitsia s muzhchinoi, a togda, kogda ona stanovitsia èkonomicheski ot nego zavisima. I bolee chem v 40 % sluchaev èto proiskhodit libo v tot moment, kogda ona beremenna, libo v tot moment, kogda ona kormit rebenka.”

Since the women's friendly agenda in Finland had been on the rise starting with 1960s, the process of working with the problems of gender equality has gone a longer way.

Having a "head start" has influenced the fact that the Nordic countries have more detailed and broader understanding of violence: violence can be recognized as such if it is physical, sexual, or psychological. Moreover, it is exactly the psychological violence, which has been put a special emphasis on:

C: Psychological violence is given much attention [in Finland]; it is usually much more dreadful and leaves more marks in people's lives, in women's lives; more than physical violence. It needs more work to be put into [in order to overcome it]; it is harder to attest. This experience stays with women for years. [...] So it seems to me that there is much more attention given to issues of psychological violence in Finland. [...] I do not know the reasons for that. Maybe, they have had a head start; they have started to work with the problem of violence earlier.¹⁵

The last criteria (psychological violence) is absent from the legal field in Russia while being a substantive act of offense in the Nordic countries. The Russian activists express their concerns regarding the existing legal framework in Russia putting a special emphasis on the fact that the country needs both a law against domestic violence and acceptance of psychological violence as one of the discursive and legal construct.

At the same time, the activists imply the importance of the states' approach once more time. The problem may seem universal; the activists, thus, underline alike ways of the problem reality (apart from several matters such as intersectionality, which will be discussed further) and consider similar methods for problem-solving. Nevertheless, the situation in countries is quite different; legal, political and discursive approaches by the states highly matter in the process of problem resolution. According to some activists, it would explain the huge figures for gendered violence in Nordic countries in the statistics. The Russian participants emphasize that such statistics only shows that the state is interested in this problem to the great extent and its real, veritable representation:

D: Even in Sweden, if you look into the statistics, they have the biggest number of sexual violence in Europe. But it does not indicate anything about sexual violence itself. It indicates how serious the state

¹⁵ "Plius ochen' bol'shoe vnimanie udelaetsia psikhologicheskomu nasiliu, kotoroe, kak pravilo, vo mnogo strashnee ostavliaet bol'she sledov v zhizni cheloveka, v zhizni zhenshchiny, bol'she, chem fizicheskoe nasilie. S nim nado bol'she rabotat', slozhnee kak-to zasvidetel'stvovat' [...]. Ostaiutsia s nim na gody. To est' tam naprimer, est' istorii zhenshchin, kotorye prozhili [...]. Im potrebovalos' 15 let posle uzhe razvoda iz nasil'stvennogo tiazhelogo braka, chtoby bolee menee psikhologicheski oklema't'sia ot psikhologicheskogo nasiliia."

is about this issue. They also count sexual violence [being conducted] in marriage, in relationships. Every episode of sexual violence is considered as a separate act of such violence.¹⁶

On the opposite side, the activists claim that the official Russian statistics by the Ministry of Internal Affairs do not represent the real scale of what is happening in the country. The figures in the reports are much lower than it exists in fact. Here is the reverse situation in the Russian context: the state does not consider the agenda of gender equality as one of the priorities; therefore, the statistics does not show factual tendencies in society.

Thus, it is a highly valuable factor that there are relatively more organizations, centres and groups dealing with gender issues including gender violence operating in the Nordic countries. Both Russian and Finnish activists recognize the importance of crisis centres for those who have experienced violence and of shelters for such victims, which sometimes save lives and surely help people to the great extent. There were lectures given by workers and activists of the crisis centres for women from Finland; some representatives of the Russian crisis centres have been present in the audience. Activists from both sides emphasize that it is quite important for regions to have a enough such centres according to the standards. This criterion is not met either in Finland or Russia; however, Finland has a quite better situation in covering regions with such institutions. One of the Finnish participants claims:

C: There is the certain European agreement [apparently, *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, and its explanatory report*] providing the number of places [in shelters] for certain population. According to this system, Finland has to have about 600 places. In fact, Finland has 120 of them. [...] This is absolutely not enough. Accordingly, every fifth women would not have a shelter when she and her kid had a need in it. [...] This is a very big problem, and there are considerable negotiations going on with the Finnish government.¹⁷

The activists from Russia highly value this practice of enlarging the number of such organizations. They admit that the situation is relatively better in Finland since there is a bigger coverage of territory with such centres; the fact that Russia is sufficiently dragging behind and lacking shelters and crisis centres is perceived with negativity.

¹⁶ "Dazhe v SHvetsii, esli smotret' statistiku, u nikh budet samoe bol'shoe kolichestvo iznasilovaniĭ po Evrope. No èto rovnym schetom nichego ne govorit ob iznasilovaniĭakh. Èto govorit tol'ko, naskol'ko ser'ezno gosudarstvo vosprinimaet ètu problemu. Nu u nikh takzhe schitaetsiā iznasilovanie v brake, v otnosheniĭakh. I kazhdyĭ èpizod nasiliā rassmatrivaetsiā kak otdel'noe iznasilovanie."

¹⁷ "Est' obshchee opredelennoe evropeĭskoe soglasenie o tom, kakoe kolichestvo mest dolzhno byt' na opredelennoe kolichestvo naseleniā. I Finliāndiā vot po ètoĭ sisteme dolzhno byt' okolo 600 s chem-to mest. V Finliāndii est' 120 po-moemu.[...]Ubezishch est' primerno 10 po strane. I ètogo katastroficheski ne khvataet. Sootvetstvenno poluchaetsiā, kazhdaĭ piataĭ zhenshchina ostaetsiā bez ubezhishcha togda, kogda eĭ i rebenku. [...] I èto ochen' bol'shaĭ problema i idut bol'shie razgovory s finskim gosudarstvom."

F: What could we claim? Surely, there is a bigger amount of organizations for protecting rights of people, rights of women, who have suffered from violence, in Finland. How many do we have here?

A: Well, around 10.

F: Around 10. That is how it is.¹⁸

There is the similar opinion expressed by another Russian activist:

B: A woman often does not have anywhere to go. Though we have a system of shelters. Very few actually know about it. The number of such shelters is disastrously low.¹⁹

Another obstacle for successfully approaching the issue of gender violence is the fact that such practices are perceived by many members of society as the usual and normal ones. It decreases the chances for a woman to try to get help at specialized organizations or to go to the police to report about the case. This situation often takes place with the domestic violence when such patterns of behaviour in a family can be explained, or excused, by existing norms of building this kind of relationships:

B: Even when she applies for support, say, to her own relatives, her friends, or therapists, she receives a very smart piece of advice by a wise woman: “Live with it. I have been living with it, you do the same”.²⁰

6.4.4 Intersectionality in Practice: One Approach, Various Focuses

It could be said that an intersectional approach has been shared among many feminist activists or people who generally deal with equality agenda. Intersectionality works at different dimensions; in the theoretical part of this research, it is described as the fact that cultures have a great impact on the gender-based problems existing in the society. Moreover, it also brings into discussion different tools for dealing with inequality in different contexts. The agenda of gender equality in the Nordic countries has been hugely dominated by the debates on intersectionality. It seems that the Russian activists, who are involved in the activities of the “Eve’s Ribs” project, very strongly support this approach, even though often the term of “intersectionality” itself is not pronounced in

¹⁸ “F: Nu vse-taki chto govorit’, v Finliandii organizatsii po zashchite prav liudei, po zashchite prav zhenshchin, kotorye postradali ot nasiliia, konechno, bol’she. U nas ikh skol’ko...?”

A: Nu 10.

F: Nu 10. Tak ono i est’.”

¹⁹ “ZHenshchine zachastuiu poiti nekuda. U nas sushchestvuet pravda sistema ubezshishch. Ochen’ malo kto o nikh znaet. Etikh ubezshishch katastroficheski malo.”

²⁰ “I dazhe kogda ona obrashchaetsia za podderzhkoj, skazhem, k rodstvennikam svoim zhe ili podrugam svoim zhe, psikhologam, to ona poluchaet ochen’ umnyi sovet mudroj zhenshchiny – terpi, ia vsiu zhizn’ terpela, i ty terpi.”

the interviews or publications. Therefore, both Russian and Nordic activists share the idea of multiple layers of discrimination when it comes to the gender equality agenda.

Moreover, apart from drawing a line between Russian and Nordic societies (as it is presented in the theoretical part of this research), in their interviews and publications activists of the project indicate the importance of various interconnections among women's identities: Russian vs. Nordic is one of them, however, it does not seem to be the only one; moreover, activists underline other more important variables of one's identity when dealing with inequality. Thus, the organizers of the "Eve's Ribs" have mentioned in one of their publications:

Moreover, we support intersectional feminism; therefore, we stand against any form of oppression.

One of the most prominent factor, which Finnish (and Nordic, in general) society has been actively discussing and working with, is the intersection between gender and race (meaning, different culture). Analyzing the content of the Russian activists, it could be said that such intersection is present in their agenda. However, these issues of gender and ethnicity have entered the feminist discussion not that long ago; apparently, it takes place through domestication of foreign ideas. However, there are more visible in their activism factors that they discuss and work with when approaching the gender inequality issues and women's problems, including, for example, financial position, sexuality, HIV status, appearance, etc. This will be discussed further in this part.

6.4.5 Gender and Ethnicity (Culture): Prominent Topic in Nordic Countries and Same Approach in Russia

As it has been mentioned, the issue of gender and culture has been playing a prominent role in the equality agenda in Nordic countries. Such discussions have been brought into reality in the connection with the migration processes into the Nordic countries and its further 'crisis'. The Finnish activists and workers of organizations, which focus on helping women, associate the increase of gendered violence in society with clash of cultures taking place in the times of increased migration. Different understanding of relations between genders comes from other cultural codes, which are possessed by newcomers; this fact can lead to phenomena of physical and sexual violence in those communities.

It seems important that such agenda has been present at the festival and the project's work from the Finnish side. There has been a representative from *Monika Naiset*: an organization, which solely works with the problem of gendered violence towards women of different cultures. Their work started in 1990s; now, they perform different kinds of activities; the core goal, however, is

to provide help for women of other cultures: it includes psychological help and running a shelter for victims of violence.

Another angle of looking to the intersection of gender and ethnicity is linked to the problem of multiple layers of discrimination: migrant women in this case have it at the double scale in both gender and cultural identities.

C: If you are a foreigner, there is the second factor, which automatically arises, [...] influences [discrimination]: how well you know the language.²¹

Such approach to deal with gender inequality has been adopted by activists in St Petersburg. It seems that this angle of looking to the women's position in Russia has only recently entered the spaces of feminist discussions. Thus, one of the organizers of the "Eve's Ribs" has started the new project: the newspaper for women, who have come to Russia from the states of Central Asia. Another important factor is that the preparations for issuing such a newspaper seem to have begun after (or during the process of) the "Eve's Ribs" festival since the first issue was published and spread in December, 2016. The influence by the cooperation with Finnish activists cannot be traced for sure; however, it looks very probable that the realization of the newspaper for women from Central Asia was amplified by the similar experience of the intersectional approach in the Nordic countries.

The team of the "Gul" newspaper represents several women from the Central Asia states and Russia (specifically, those who live in St Petersburg). They issue the newspaper in four different languages: Russian, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik. For now, the newspaper consists of the articles about personal experience of migrant women in Russia, description of cultural activities in the city, the list of organizations, which can be helpful in different life situations. Sometimes, they discuss exclusively women's problems in there. The content of "Gul" is rather feminist, and encourages women to self-realization. Moreover, the activists of the "Gul" newspaper underline that ethnic communities of those Asian countries in Russia are usually connected to the commercial, and sometimes criminal, activities; members of the communities reproduce those gender norms, which exist in their countries of origin.

D: As the female participants of our project claim, it [gender inequality] is a very serious problem in Central Asia: women are not encouraged to express their own opinions, to show discontent, etc. That

²¹ "Esli ty inostranka, to u tebia avtomaticheskii podključaetsia eshche étot faktor, to kak éto vliiaet, kak vliiaet znanie iazyka."

is why it seems especially important for us to somehow support women from Central Asia in their self-realization, in their wish to pursue their own goals, etc.²²

However, it seems that the newspaper does not have a goal to force some feminist standards on women from Central Asia. First, the idea of the newspaper was born while the Russian activist of the “Eve’s Ribs” has been working in the NGO for children of migrants for about 5 years; as she claims, there were some number of very active women (mothers, other relatives) from the Central Asia. All the texts for the newspaper are produced by the migrant women.

D: Since migrant women write material [for the newspaper] and think of topics themselves, they know better what would be more interesting and topical for their female compatriots.²³

However, it must be noticed that this Russian activist from the “Eve’s Ribs” project is one of the main organizers and coordinators for the “Gul” newspaper. Thus, even though she “tries not to dominate during the discussions” (as she herself indicates in the interview) of the “Gul” content since she is not a part of the target group, she understands some influence that she brings into the team.

D: There are some principles [while writing texts for the newspaper]: material must not include any representations of homophobia, discrimination, sexism. Probably, it is my influence.²⁴

Thus, the agenda of “Gul” is very attentive towards migrants’ needs, but additionally, has some influence by the overall Russian feminist discourse. Moreover, while analyzing data of published interviews about the “Gul” project, it can be seen that public representation of it comes from the Russian activist. She is used to public speeches, while those who work for the project but possess the migrant background is rather silent in the media spaces at the moment.

Additionally, the authors recognize the double discrimination of such women. First, it is discrimination based on gender; specifically, the reason of it is that women come from cultures with dominated traditional gender roles. At the same time, the organizer of both the “Eve’s Ribs” project and the “Gul” newspaper acknowledges the fact that the Soviet Union and, further, Russia has played a permanent role in emancipation of women from the Central Asia states.

²² “Kak govoriat uchastnitsy nashego proekta, èto dovol’no ser’eznaia problema v Tsentral’noi Azii, chto zhenshchin uchat ne vyskazyvat’ svoego mneniia, ne proiavliat’ nedovol’sstva i t.d. Poètomu osobenno vazhnym nam kazhetsia kak-to podderzhivat’ devushek iz Tsentral’noi Azii v ikh zhelanii samostoiatel’nosti, v ikh zhelanii idti k svoei tseli i t.d.”

²³ “Tak kak pishut materialy i pridumyvaiut temy sami migrantki, to oni sami znaiut, chto dlia ikh sootchestvennits interesnee, chto aktual’nee.”

²⁴ “Est’ printsipial’nye momenty: v gazete ne dolzhno byt’ proiavlenii gomofobii, diskriminatsii, seksizma. Vozmozhno, v chem-to ia vliiaiu.”

D: If we talk about the Central Asia states, as I see it, there is a common opinion that the Soviet Union did a lot for gender equality. The stronger a country was integrated into the Soviet system, the more social benefits and opportunities for emancipation were there. [...] Those cities, which were integrated into the Soviet system, were more progressive.²⁵

On the other hand, women coming from the Central Asia states, apart from gender inequality, experience discrimination based on their ethnicity and a migrant status. As one of the activists from the newspaper team (being a part of the Central Asian community herself) specifies,

H: Now it is very hard to find a work place, where you are treated with a fair salary. There are many places with processes of staff reduction; people work several shifts but are paid only for one. In the end, they work for months without any salary and do not know where to report in these situations since they do not know the [Russian] language very well.²⁶

The Russian activist also talks explicitly about it.

D: Migrant women from the Central Asia states experience double discrimination; this fact is one of the reasons for choosing this target group [for the newspaper].²⁷

What seems to be different in the contexts of Finnish and Russian activist actors is how they undertake the whole issue of migration. Since the migration processes have been present in the Nordic agenda of equality for a while now, it is the feminist activists who raise the issue of non-discrimination for all the foreigners (both female and male). The migration movements into the Nordic countries have led to emergence and amplification of right-wing and nationalistic discussions in the society.

C: Of course, [...] there are, unfortunately, many such unpleasant racist and nationalistic movements, which emerge everywhere. In Finland as well, it is usual.²⁸

Thus, the whole issue seems to be very gendered in a way that appeal for some nationalistic solutions of the migration problem is called by different male politicians and activists. The feminist

²⁵ "Esli govorit' pro strany Tsentral'noi Azii, to kak ia, naprimer, vizhu, takoe rasprostranennoe mnenie, chto Sovetskii Soiuz dal ochen' mnogo v plane togo zhe ravnopravii zhenshchin. I chem bol'she integrirrovana v Sovetskii Soiuz, tem bol'she blag sotsial'nykh dlia zhenshchin, bol'she vozmozhnosti dlia emansipatsii. [...] . Kakie goroda byli bol'she integrirrovany vo vremia SSSR, te byli bolee progressivny."

²⁶ "Seichas ochen' slozhno najti rabotu tak, chtoby s zarplatoj ne obmanuli. Mnogo gde idet sokrashchenie shtata, liudiam staviat po neskol'ko smen, a platiat za odnu. V itoge oni rabotaiut mesiatsami bez zarabotnoi platy i ne znaiut kuda obrashchat'sia v takikh situatsiakh, tak kak plokho znaiut iazyk."

²⁷ "Migrantki iz Srednei Azii podvergaiutsia dvoinoi diskriminatsii — eto odna iz prichin vybora dannaio tselevoi auditorii."

²⁸ "Konechno, mnogo, k sozhaleniiu, takikh nepriiatnykh rasistskikh natsionalisticheskikh dvizhenii, kotorye voznikaiut povsiudu. I v Finlandii, eto normal'no."

activists, who try to fight any form of discrimination and oppression, have their stands on the approach based on human rights.

E: [...] we have people, asylum seekers, coming here [to Finland]. And it is very gendered how it is dealt with. We have this male ministers from the Centre Party and the True Finns Party, “We will not take asylum seekers anymore”. And there is male hate activism happening right now. And it is only female activists, who actually do something for asylum seekers. [...] it is women, who help them, and rise these human rights issues, and want to point out that we have also been in this situation when we had to leave the country. [...] So it is quite gendered, and quite a feminist issue actually, this asylum seekers coming and this whole racism thing.

Therefore, the feminist activists in Finland have been trying to politicize the whole process of migration and tackles the discussion on racism from the feminist point of view. This approach leads to discussion not only of women’s rights but of any oppressed and discriminated groups in general. Thus, the same speaker underlines that this is quite a difference between Russia and Finland. She without doubt agrees that such intersectional approach between gender and race is present in the Russian feminist discourse as well; however, it is limited to some contexts. This conclusion is supported by the fact that such work is done only by a small group of activists in St Petersburg.

To build up on this point, activists from St Petersburg, on the opposite, try to step back from the political issues, keeping in mind that it could be unsafe for their environment. It seems that those working on “Gul” do not see enough social and representative power and support to start talking about politics, or somehow over-politicize the issue as well.

D: We plan to react on the topical stories as well, but we will be careful with political issues. While discussing the first issue, women offered to write something about elections in Uzbekistan, but we came to the point that it was not very safe for them to touch upon the political agenda.²⁹

Another difference is (and here could be a parallel with the different approach towards gendered violence by Russian and Finnish activists) that while the Nordic feminist activists has recently started to raise the issue of discrimination against both female and male migrants, the Russian approach deals solely with women’s positions. Apparently, excluding men from the equality agenda might be understood by the time period of bringing such issues on the agenda: since the discourse on double discrimination based on ethnicity and gender has just recently entered the feminist discourse, it is understandable why such activists deal with the women’s position only.

²⁹ “My planiruem reagirovat’ i na ostrye istorii, no budem akkuratny s osveshcheniem politiki. Pri obsuzhdenii pervogo nomera devushki predlagali napisat’ chto-nibud’ po povodu vyborov v Uzbekistane, no prishli k vyvodu, chto dlia nikh samikh ne ochen’ bezopasno zatragivat’ politicheskuiu povestku.”

Apart from being attentive to the migrant cultures, the St Petersburg based activists from the “Eve’s Ribs” project try to raise the issue of different experience of those cultures, which are part of the Russian Federation. The issue of the Islamic feminism and the overall positions of women in those contexts affecting by Islam has been a topic of serious debates among both feminist and other civil activist communities. It needs to claim that such discussions have been present in the Nordic context for a while now; although, the Islamic topic has entered the discussions on equality in Russia not that long ago. It partly is included in the migrant issues in Russia as well; however, as it has been indicated in the interviews of the Russian activists involved in the “Gul” project, this issue has not been raised. What really becomes the issue of consideration, is the cultural peculiarities in the Russian Caucasus national republics: the region hugely influenced by the traditional norms and the religious feelings.

Thus, the activists of “Eve’s Ribs” from St Petersburg have been organizing an event on this topic; particularly, it was a lecture about the Islamic feminism. In the description of the event, they underline that

Feminists from Europe often share the idea that Islam is a culture, which exclusively puts a woman under discrimination; wherein, they forget about existence of Islamic feminism and its achievements. Our goal is to fill this gap in our knowledge and understand whether the cultural and activist dialogue is possible between us and how we could build a way from discrimination towards solidarity.³⁰

Thus, the path for *solidarity* plays a big role with other cultural communities from the Russian side as well. The same conclusion has been drawn while analyzing the cooperation and building a dialogue between the Nordic and Russian participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” project. However, understanding between Nordic and national Russian contexts are better and stronger than between those and other cultural communities with different gender codes. However, there is no implications on presenting themselves as experts, or being a medium of “progressive” gender relations. Additionally, the “Eve’s Ribs” activists tell about the fact that colonialism and imperial policies, including those performed by Russian and the USSR, have led to radicalization in the Islam countries. Moreover, some feminists, while trying to help Muslim women, amplify their repression and objectification. Thus, the goal of such discussions is not only to bring this issue of Muslim women into agenda but also to find ways how European and Russian feminists could *support* Muslim women.

³⁰ “Часто европейские феминистки прiderzhивaютcя мнениa o том, что ислам - это исклyчител’но кyльтyра, в которой жeнщина подлeжит oбoй дискриминaции, при этoм зaбывaя o сyщeствoвaнии и дoстижeниaх исламскoгo фeминизмa. Нaшa зaдaчa нeмнoгo зaпoлнит’ этoт пpoбeл в знaнииaх и пoниaт’, вoзмoжeн ли кyльтyрныi и aктивистский диaлoг мeждy нaми, и кaк пoстрoит’ пyт’ oт дискриминaции к cолидaрнoсти.”

In the conclusion, it should be noticed that the discussions on that intersection between gender and ethnicity (culture) in the Russian context has been present to the great extent only in St Petersburg. It leads to several conclusions. First, this fact shows that St Petersburg being a big city attracts many people from different backgrounds to move there; thus, St Petersburg has a big percentage of people of different cultures living there. Since it is a place attracting migrants living there, this agenda has become a prominent factor in the city's life. Second, St Petersburg has a very vivid activist community, including one with the feminist agenda, which explains the fact that new ideas are domesticated into this realm first. Finally, and equivalently, St Petersburg seems to be a region with advanced feminist agenda, which could both a reason and a consequence of tight collaboration with foreign, especially, Nordic, partners.

6.4.6 Gender and Other Variables

Apart from the intersection between gender and ethnicity (culture), other variables are present in the feminist agenda. The difference here is that they are shared by other regional feminist groups as well (unlike those connected to ethnicity). Another important hallmark is that other variables do not have much in common with the Nordic agenda and ways of underpinning the issue of inequality; it might mean that even though the activists share the same intersectional approach, which have been domesticated, they raise other factors influencing women's discrimination.

One of them is financial status of women. During the "Eve's Ribs" festival, the topic of homeless women has been raised. The activist working in Finland presented some information on this issue from the Finnish side. Additionally, the session with her raised the question of violence in the lives of those women, who possess low financial status. The Finnish side of the project emphasized that this intersection of inequality has been rarely discussed even in Finland. Yet, the Russian organizers of the festival has decided to develop this session making of it a mutual exchange of experience. Thus, a lawyer of the St Petersburg organization for homeless people gave a lecture about a gendered aspect of homelessness and discussed how they try to pay attention to it while working with homeless people. The fact itself of bringing this issue to the agenda from the Russian side indicated that some ideas for giving a new approach to intersectionality has been brought from their Nordic partners. However, the deeper analysis of domestication of these policies seem to be impossible to undertake at this stage of collaboration since this issue has not been reflected upon to the enough extent.

Another variable, which has been present mostly from the Russian side, is women's sexuality. The important fact seems to be that activists from different Russian federal subjects and groups are

attentive to this problem. Thus, this issue has been raised by both Moscow and Samara groups during the festival. The Moscow group made a documentary about women with non-heterosexual identity; the Samara group included the story of a lesbian woman into their theatre play. Women with non-heteronormative sexuality also experience double discrimination: of sexism and homophobia. The important factor here is that the Russian LGBT community has experienced more discrimination in the past few years, which is connected to the viral discussions of the topic of sexuality and enactment of the “propaganda law”. Thereby, this issue is hugely present in the Russian feminist discourse since homophobia is seen as a massive cultural code of oppression. Moreover, some feminist groups try to deal with issues of sexism and homophobia on the same level taking into account that these questions are highly inter-connected and come from traditional heteronormative gendered codes.

Another problem, which existed in the Russian space of discussion, was the intersection of gender and HIV status. Such problem was raised by the regional group from Samara. Unfortunately, the situation with spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia has been proceeding with the great speed.

In general, by looking at the content of those variables, which has been raised by different groups during the “Eve’s Ribs” project, it could be seen, which problems seem to be the most serious ones in different local context. The intersectional approach stays the same: it is shared by both Finnish and Russian local activists. Moreover, some problems are stimulated to be brought into the Russian agenda while activists have been working together and exchanging experience (it seems to be the case with the intersection with ethnicity/culture and financial status). However, the Russian activists often underpin those issues, which are present in different local contexts: for example, with the case of homophobia that can be seen as a big issue in the Russian context and an HIV/AIDS status since the situation with its spreading could be described as rather serious (especially, in some federal subjects).

6.4.7 Popularizing Equality Agenda among Population

Another common problem, which has been arisen during the interviews, is the fact that many people are skeptical about the feminist agenda and the whole issue of equality. It is linked to many stereotypes existing around the word ‘feminism’ that have been building in societies during the history. However, it seems different how big the scale of the problem is seen as existing in Finland by the Finnish activists and as one in Russia by the Russian participants. This part will start with the analysis of the Finnish approach, then tackle the Russian approach, which will directly lead to the next chapter.

As for Finland, those activists involved in the “Eve’s Ribs” festival formulate this problem very specifically. First, they underline this fact that the word ‘feminism’ and those actions done by different feminist and pro-equality groups are often perceived in a negative way. It is both connected with the wrong way of understanding what feminists are aimed for and what they actually want to achieve. It could be a consequence of considerable changes and shifts in public discourse towards the equality agenda, which, for example, in the Nordic societies have been done in a relatively short period of time. Many people have experienced such shifts during the period of their lives. It causes considerable resistance and opposition. Feminists are often associated with radical actions, which were performed by various activists during the 20th century; that is why the word ‘feminism’ itself is perceived negatively.

The importance of tackling with this issue seems apparent in the Finnish context since different groups from the festival were separately talking about it. First, what is the clearest evidence of paying attention to such problem is the fact that there is a whole group of Finnish activists that deals directly and solely with this issue: their motto sounds as “We are taking back the F-word”. It is a group of five people who tries to improve the reputation of the feminist movement and ideas. They perform on the streets of Helsinki and organize different online moves in this regard. Apart from this specific group, other activists, who were specifically dealing with the problem of gendered violence, have specified this issue as well.

The reasons for such bad attitude towards the feminist actions are not verbalized in very specific terms; however, one of the most prominent narrative that has been brought to the interviews is that such resistance towards pro-equality agenda mostly comes from people of the older generation. They characterize it as a very positive phenomenon that more and more people share the equality agenda nowadays. However, some, especially, older, people are still resistant towards it.

C: There is a difference between [...] generations 20 years ago and now. For example, the attitudes towards equality and women’s positions have been changing in the Finnish society during last [years]. It could be even seen at the last alternation of generations. The older generation possessed patriarchal mentality much more, wherein now it is more and more going towards equality, even when it comes to such issues as sharing household duties, childcare. [...]

People of the older generation, who are now about 50-60 years old... [...] a system of their beliefs, values, which they exist in, is very different from ours, of those who are 20 or 30 years old.³¹

³¹ “nu budet otlichat’sia, naprimer, 20 let nazad ili seichas, pokolenie. Otnoshenie dazhe, naprimer, k ravnopraviu i polozheniu zhenshchin v printsipe v tom zhe finskom obshchestve ochen’ sil’no izmenilos’ za poslednie.. Èto dazhe možno videt’ za posledniuu raznitsu v pokoleniakh. Predydushchee pokolenie bylo namnogo eshche bolee

Other activists express the same opinion.

G: For people of an older generation, feminism is, unfortunately, almost a swearing. We often face negativity expressed by older people.³²

Moreover, it seems that a negative connotation is somehow fixed in a whole cultural matrix. Even people, who generally share equality agenda, sometimes avoid using the word 'feminism' while describing themselves; such situation even took place during the "Eve's Ribs" when one of the participants, who was a newcomer to the feminist activism, rejected the idea that she was a feminist.

B: We had very slight contradictions in our groups. For example, our Finnish colleague first thought that she was not a feminist, and that problems do not directly touch upon her.³³

Such issue is perceived as troubling but very understandable, at the same time. The participants claim that gender norms and the cultural matrix, which we live in nowadays, have been formed for centuries along with human history. Thus, the process of changes normally takes much time and discussions in societies.

C: It [gender inequality] has been existing in all societies for such a long time; that is why it will take very long before people would start treat each other not based on their gender (apart from some evident physical differences).³⁴

Now, the attitudes of the Russian activists towards the problem of popularizing the gender equality agenda among population will be discussed. To begin with, it must be noticed that the same idea has been present in their discussions and interviews. They underline the fact that many Russians have very negative feelings towards feminist agenda. However, there come several differences.

First, the Finnish activists seem to be more evident in expressing and articulating this problem than their Russian colleagues. However, some similar ideas expressed on that matter could be drawn. The Russian activists, relating to their personal experience and making some general conclusions about the Russian society, underline that an absolute majority of people perceive feminism in a very negative way that, in its turn, can be explained by both stereotypes, misunderstanding of the

patriarkhal'nogo sklada, pri tom kak seichas éto absoliutno tochno vse bol'she i bol'she idet v storonu ravnopravíia dazhe o tom, kak delíatsia domashnie obíazannosti, ukhod za det'mi. Starshee pokolenie, te, komu seichas 50-60, ikh pozítsií, ikh tsennosti, v kotorykh oni sushchestvuiut, ochen' sil'no otlichaiutsia ot nas, 20-30-letnikh."

³² "Dlia predstavitelei starshego pokoleniia feminizm - éto, k sozhaleniiu, prakticheski rugatel'stvo. Ot liudei postarshe chasto prikhoditsia stalkivat'sia s negativom."

³³ "Nu v gruppakh byli sovsem nebol'shie protivorechiia. Naprimer, finskaia kollega snachala dumala, chto ona ne feministka i problemy ee ne kasaiutsia."

³⁴ "Éto zhe sushchestvovalo tak dolgo vo vsek obshchestvakh, chto éto eshche dolgo-dolgo-dolgo, chtoby liudi perestali otnositsia drug k drugu vne zavisimosti ot pola. Nu esli ne brat' kakie-to fizicheskie razlichia."

feminist goals and general pursuing other values in life (when people knowingly reject the gender equality ideas). Thus, one of the participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” project talks about it.

A: It can be felt that there is a stereotypical attitude [towards feminism], that feminism is something ugly, even though people don’t really think over what and why it is. There is denial and that’s it. The most important is that they understand it as a threat towards their position, their privileges. Meaning “Sure, would I be sharing my privileges with you”; this is an answer that is going back [at us] for what seems to be an elementary social procedure. [...]

Other man started to claim, “Why should we discuss it [inequality]? Why do you [feminists] need this?”.³⁵

The reasons for such attitudes, according to the Russian activists, can be very different. However, they expressed an opinion that one of them could be that there is a rise and spread of radical feminism taking place in the modern political Russian reality.

F: I have different thoughts about it [the reasons]. There are indeed people who criticize feminism. I think it could occur because... I don’t know how the situation in other countries, in my opinion, it’s not the same in Finland, but radical feminism is widespread in Russia. [...] It’s obvious why [it happens]: [political] situations are rather harsh. But opinions are formed. This is, of course, not cool. It is important to differentiate [radical and non-radical feminism]. [...]

Yes, this is very important because many people actually can form their opinions based on some harsh [feminist] actions.³⁶

Thus, the discourses on what seems to be the same problem of resistance towards feminist ideas in societies are rather different. It might come from various reasons. The most apparent one might be the fact that the equality discourses and movements have been present in the Nordic countries for several decades; it led to emergence of a somewhat coherent system of dealing with issues of gender inequality. There are some groups of people who generally share to the less extent the feminist ideas; however, they do not constitute the absolute majority in the Nordic societies. Thus, it appears to be an open debate where a pro-equality party constitutes rather strong and consolidate

³⁵ “I chuvstvuetsia, chto stereotipnoe takoe otnoshenie, chto feminizm – èto gadko, khotia liudi osobo ne vdumvaiutsia, chto èto, zachem. Prosto otritsanie idet i vse. I samoe glavnoe, chto oni ponimaiut èto kak ugrozu svoemu položeniiu, svoim privilegiiam. To est’ «aga, budu ia seichas s vami delitsia privilegiiami», vot takoi idet otvet prosto kazalos’ by na èlementarnuiu sotsial’nuuiu protseduru.

A drugoi chelovek, u nego tozhe poshlo, «zachem èto obsuzhdat’? zachem vam èto nuzhno?».”

³⁶ “Est’ raznye mysli po ètomu povodu. Est’, deistvitel’no, liudi, kotorye kritikuiut feminizm. Mne kazhetsia, èto eshche mozhet proiskhodit’ iz-za togo, chto... IA ne znaiu, kstati, kak v drugikh stranakh, po-moemu, v Finliandii vse-taki ne tak, no v Rossii konkretno radikal’nyi feminizm ochen’ rasprostranen. [...] No mneniia na ètoi osnove tozhe formiruiutsia. I èto, konechno, stremno. Èto neobkhodimo razgranichivat’. [...] Nu da, èto, konechno, vazhnyi vopros, potomu chto mnogie mogut deistvitel’no delat’ vyvody tol’ko na osnove kakikh-to zhestkikh aktsii.”

groups and individuals. In the Russian context, where the patriarchal ideas are present among a very huge group of people and where the state rarely mainstreams pro-feminist ideas, the problem of popularizing the equality agenda is articulated in rather different terms. It does not resemble detailed debates about various political or social issues; the situation in Russia indicates that some rather small groups of people (in terms of the whole Russian population) try to bring the agenda of feminism and equality into public discourse to somehow start broader discussions on topics of inequality and to deconstruct some present gender norms and practices.

B: In fact, [we try] to build a civil society and re-formulate agenda in media through some informational throws-in in order to draw attention to actual important issues, which concern not only some particular cases in the elites, but [...] everyone in Russia.³⁷

It all leads to different goals of their activism, which should be (according to the interviews) then performed through different methods. This issue will be discussed further.

6.5 Exchanging Methods

Based on the analysis made above, the Nordic and Russian activists generally share the same feminist agenda. Overall, the Russian participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” project positively evaluate the system related to the gender equality norms and policies existing in the Nordic countries. One of the most important differences is that they apply those feminist ideas to their local (regional) contexts where some peculiarities might occur while working on some topics.

The same local approach goes with choosing *methods* for performing their activities. However, as it is seen from the interviews, methods of activism and pursuing activists’ goals vary to the great extent since the political contexts are rather different; thus, they aim for the same outcomes in their own societies and communities, but they can achieve it through different means *keeping in mind peculiarities of the political systems* existing in their countries of residence.

There has been some discussion on different goals of their activism above. Since the Russian political elites do not seem to support to the great extent the gender equality ideas, including, ones existing in the Nordic countries, this agenda is mostly absent from the public and official discourse. For now, the goal of the Russian feminist activism seems to be efforts for bringing such agenda to the public spaces and start professional and societal discussions on the topic of gender equality.

³⁷ “Nu po faktu – chtoby my sozdali grazhdanskoe obshchestvo i pereformulirovali SMI i media na informatsionnye vbrosy s tem, chtoby obratit’ ikh vnimanie na samom dele aktual’nye problemy, kotorye kasaetsia ne chastnykh sluchaev sverkh, a to’ povestki, kotorai na samom dele kasaetsia kazhdoi i kazhdogo v Rossii.”

Thus, the outcome would be reformulation the public opinion about this issue. Here are some separate thoughts on it coming from different interviews with the participants.

A: As a matter of fact, we try to “reprogram” the public opinion.³⁸

B: Accordingly, our main line of work is [...] taking measures in order to change this public opinion, which is a result of patriarchal education with right-wing incline.³⁹

At a radio interview, this participant expressed the same ideas.

B: Of course, our goal is not just making ‘arty art’ but creating a precedent for discussions with audience, participants.

Interviewer: Maybe, with the authorities?

B: Ideally, yes. And for discussions with journalists. Well, the concept is such.⁴⁰

This goal directly comes from the political discourse existing in Russia. In order to achieve their goal, they try reach wider audience. That is another reason why some of the participants have chosen to talk about gender-based violence: it is an urgent problem in the Russian context, which concerns so many families and individuals, it is a systematic problem in the society; that is why it can lead to wider reaction and cause the public discussion.

D: Maybe, in order to appeal to a massive audience, we should talk about the problem of violence: physical violence, scandalous cases of it. Some more complicated issues, not that obvious.⁴¹

The Russian activists understand though that it is not a simple goal, which could be achieved fast. That is why they have chosen to organize the whole “Eve’s Ribs” project, which involved groups from different federal subjects and is constituted of planned work for quite a long time.

B: I think it is hard to change the public opinion with one simple act. We need to do it systematically.⁴²

The most obvious method for bringing one’s own agenda to the discourse and starting a dialogue is public demonstrations and actions. The “Eve’s Ribs” participants often use different art

³⁸ “Po idee my pytaemsia pereprogramirovat’ obshchestvennoe soznanie.”

³⁹ “Sootvetstvenno, osnovnoe nashe napravlenie raboty – mery, chtoby eta tochka zreniia, kotoraiia iavliaetsia v chastnosti rezul’tatom patriarkhal’nogo vospitaniia s pravym ukonom, chtoby eta tochka zreniia izmenilas’.”

⁴⁰ “A: Konechno, nasha zadacha – ne prosto sdelat’ takoi art-art, a sozdat’ pretsedent dlia diskussii, dlia diskussii s zalom, s uchastnikami i uchastnitsami.

Vedushchaia: Mozhet byt’ so vlast’iu?

A: V ideale da. I dlia diskussii s zhurnalistami. Nu vot, v obshchem, kontseptsii takaia.”

⁴¹ “Navernoe, chtoby obrashchat’sia k massovomu zritel’iu, stoit govorit’ o problemakh nasiliia, o fizicheskom nasilii, o vopiiushchikh sluchaiakh. Kakie-to bolee slozhnye temy, bolee neodnoznachnye.”

⁴² “Mne kazhetsia, odnoi aktsiei izmenit’ ochen’ slozhno, slozhno izmenit’ obshchestvennoe mnenie. Nuzhno meniati’ sistematicheski.”

techniques to do so. Why the Russian activists can domesticate only a small range of methods for activism is discussed further.

6.5.1 Demonstrations and Public Actions: (Im?)Possible Domestication into Political Context

The Finnish participants usually try to use the tool of public demonstrations and actions in order to reach population and authorities with their agenda and demands. The political context allows to use these methods quite easily. Moreover, since the Nordic states openly lead the politics of gender equality, which includes the overall equality agenda in the official discourse, presence of politicians, who are open for such initiatives, and established women-friendly policies, both social (gender equality in the private sphere) and political (including quotas in different public structures, which facilitate promotion of feminist-friendly ideas to the high political level), it is easier for the feminist activists and organizations to communicate their ideas to the wider audience. Thus, one of the Finnish organizers of the festival claim,

E: Of course, there is a big difference [between Russia and the Nordic countries]. In Finland, first, there is a possibility to talk to politicians and people who decide. Also, we have these quotas: women's quotas to some extent in the official structures. [...] And there are gender equality groups in many Finnish organizations. [...] All these equality groups, which at times can be questioned how much power they had, but anyway they exist. And you can't ignore the fact that you have to talk about women.

Another facilitating factor for promoting gender equality ideas in the Nordic countries is quite open media towards different issues, especially, ones related to the equality agenda.

E: In Finland, we have media that is open to [feminists]. In Russia, internet is also quite good, but then you have to know where to find. So both of them work in many ways with media, but in Finland they [different activists] are actually able to get to media.

In Russia, the activists describe the current political system in rather negative terms when it comes to gender policies and present discourse. First, they indicate that the discourse on repression of women and a category of patriarchy has never properly entered the public discourse; it did not take place either during the Soviet times (even though there was a proclamation of gender equality and some measures taken in this regard) or at modern times after the dissolution of the USSR. The official discourse often uses quite masculine ideas and forms to present the current political agenda; thus, they are actively using them based on the gender stereotypes. In general, the whole discourse is rather far from the equality agenda; the biggest part of current political agenda lies on

militarization, national interests, which understanding comes from realistic approach and is based on the terms of power.

A: Here is a problem: we have a post-Soviet discourse, which denies such a modern approach; it [feminism] is a part of a radical movement, theory, and practice because it does not constitute the mainstream. It is not about Crimea, [...] the victory in the Great Patriotic War; I don't what other examples I can give here. It is much more beneficial to keep status quo when it comes to this problem as the Soviet society and state did it.⁴³

In general, activists claim that such gender equality discourse is often opposed at the high level. They put as example the recent law about decriminalization of domestic battery, an overall pure work of police when it comes to the cases of domestic violence, existence of the official list of occupations, which are prohibited to work in for women, different initiatives to limit the right for abortions, etc. Thus, they claim that the problem of gender inequality is not recognized at the federal level.

B: In Russia, they [laws for gender equality] are not only opposed; the laws, which pass, are completely the opposite. [...] Moreover, whole politics in Russia is ultra-right-wing.⁴⁴

It all leads to the fact that the method of public demonstrations and actions are quite limited in the Russian context. There are two inter-connected reasons for that. First, through such method, which is highly present in the Nordic context, is hard to achieve the goal of achieving gender equality norms in Russia, since the whole public and official discourse opposes such agenda. While the Nordic activists see it clear who they would communicate their ideas and demands and for what exact purposes they would do it, the Russian context seems to be more difficult to mainstream such ideas through the street actions. Thus, one of the Russian activists indicate,

F: In Russia, everything becomes more complicated because organizing any public street actions are related to the political issues. What is more, it does not even relate to our goals, it related to the fact how our legislation works.⁴⁵

Moreover, the activists realize that since the Russian political culture lacks the experience of using public street actions for achieving political goals (it comes from the Soviet times when such actions

⁴³ "Vot problema – ostalsia postsovetiskii, otritsaet sovremennyi takoi podkhod, eta chast' radikal'nogo dvizheniia, teorii i praktiki, potomu chto eto ne meinstrim. Eto ne krym nash; ne znaiu, kakoi primer privesti – spasibo dedu za pobedu, vot eto vse. Gorazdo vygodnee sokhraniat' k podkhodam k etoi probleme, kak eto delalo sovetskoe obshchestvo i gosudarstvo."

⁴⁴ "V Rossii eto ne tol'ko oppozitsioniruetsia, no i prinimaiutsia sovershenno protivopolozhnye. Bolee togo, vsia nasha politika iavliaetsia ul'tra pravoii."

⁴⁵ "V Rossii vse uslozhniaetsia tem, chto u nas seichas organizatsiia kak takovykh aktsii, meropriatii publicnykh zaviazano na politike, prichem eto ne sviazano konkretno s nashimi tseliami, eto skoree sviazano s tem, chto tak ustroeno nashe zakonodatel'stvo."

were oppressed), the population generally treats such demonstrations in a very skeptical and suspicious way. Political public demonstrations have been criticized and discredited for a long time in the Russian history; that is why it is hard to attract supporters through this method.

A: So it [artistic performances] is a soft tool in a way, it is not about walking around with posters, but at the same time, it is very emotional. Maybe, it is more suitable for the Russian society because [street actions] cause rejection.⁴⁶

Additionally, nowadays, Russia experiences limitations put on the freedom of assembly; especially, it concerns opposition groups (which in many ways can be applied to the feminist groups).

E: Of course, there are things that you can do in both countries. But I am talking about freedom of assembly and things like that, you cannot do there [in Russia]. This is what I thought would be interesting for both groups because, as for the Finns, we have to be aware that it is not to be taken for granted that we actually can do all these things. We have had so many demonstrations this years, I cannot count, I have been to so many.

However, the situation with the freedom of assembly varies in different contexts; here again it needs to be emphasized the importance of local *regional* peculiarities. Different federal subjects in Russia do not only have some specific problems that they pay attention to while doing their field work; moreover, to some extent, federal subjects have rather different *political agenda* that in the end allows, or does not allow, to talk about specific issues, or to use methods for public demonstrations. Thus, for example, the city of Saint Petersburg has a quite positive reputation when it comes to the gender issues; it is also easier to hold a public event or a street action there. Samara, in its turn, is said to be rather conservative when it comes to this issues so activists work through other methods.

Therefore, during the “Eve’s Ribs” project, participants experienced difficulties while discussing issues of implementing their ideas in action. Since the contexts are rather different, they could not possibly work through the same methods, but discussed those that can be successfully implemented in their contexts. Thus, the Finnish and Russian participants were working in separate groups, although they exchanged the results of discussion in the end. One of the organizers from the Finnish side claims recalling the education part of the project, which included different trainings and seminars for activist groups,

⁴⁶ “To est’ èto takoi̇ miagkii̇ instrument, èto ne s plakatami khodit’, no v to zhe vremiȧ èmotsional’no, mozhët byt’, dliȧ rossiiskogo obshchestva èto bol’she podkhodit, potomu chto èto otritsanie vyzvaet.”

E: I think there were moments when the Finns could not modify because there are so big differences. [...] It was for me quite clear from the beginning that they [Finnish participants] would not be able to benefit so much from some of the trainings because Russia is so specific with all that legal [issues]. It is so hard to do anything there. [...] But I thought it could be interesting for the Russians to see also the Finnish side and what things can be done. [...] So we were in groups, and still the Finns were in the group of their own because the system is so different. We had different ideas what we could do in our federal subjects. I think that was a moment of communication because everybody was able to see, “Okay, your city is like that, you cannot even talk about these things. We have this problem, and we do this”. I think I would add more of those moments.

Therefore, the Russian activists cannot domesticate such public methods of activism as demonstrations and public actions (even though they try to organize such from time to time). Thus, they have been using other means to communicate their ideas to the audience, which is more suitable for the Russian context.

6.5.2 Art as Tool for Feminist Activism

Now after covering what the activists cannot implement in Russia as their tools for activism, it is time to discuss what methods they actually find beneficial and appropriate for the Russian context. Such a tool appears to be different artistic practices. To begin with, it must be noticed that such actions in many ways come from experiences of the Russian activists themselves; it does seem that such methods have been domesticated from the Nordic countries since they have another culture of activism, which includes public demonstrations. On the opposite, the Nordic participants of the project have been learning from their Russian colleagues. Moreover, since it is more essential for the Russian activists to use various artistic tools for their activism, they seem to have more experience in this regard, which leads to sort of professionalism in this regard. Thus, the Russian participants of the “Eve’s Ribs” project evaluate their work done, while preparing theatrical performances about gender inequality for the festival, as of a very high level. There is another adding factor to such ‘professionalism’ of the Russian activists: since they do not have much support in the society by the officials, they have to do everything by themselves, which leads to great amount of experience and knowledge that they possess while doing both theoretical and practical fields of work.

A: Or methods, which we use. I first wanted to say that they [Finns] are more advanced, but hardly they have any problems over there... Even this play [done by the Finnish group]: basically, there are the

same problems [shown at the plays], but one could see how we did it, and how they did it. [...] They used an out-of-date form [for a play] in order to talk about this problem.⁴⁷

However, it cannot be claimed that there were not any learning process from the Russian side. The Finnish participants were introducing different campaigns that they used over the years; this part of an educational process included presentations mostly about flashmobs (which also can be seen as an artistic tool in a way). Although, the whole idea of bringing art as a tool for activism was brought by the Russian participants to the festival. There are several reasons for that.

First, art appears to be a soft tool for doing activism as it was discussed in the previous part of this work. Even though such artistic means get political in many cases, it is hard to put limitations on that. Therefore, the Russian activists use this method in order to avoid persecution, which usually follows some political demonstrations in their classical sense made by different opposition groups. As one of the Russian participants claims,

A: Because we do activities, which oppose the official rhetoric, [here comes] art when you cannot speak out directly; it relates to political [issues], especially, ones that are not alike as a political vision of a majority. Accordingly, at least, [it can be done] in such a way.⁴⁸

Moreover, the activists claim that using artistic means is easier in a psychological way since in this case, they would experience less pressure in the current political situation.

Second, as it has been underlined above, art seems to be a more effective tool for communication with wider audience. The street public demonstrations can be seen as more radical by many citizens in Russia so they do not feel connection with these action; artistic performances, in its turns, could be more personal, emotional, and then sensitive to other people's experiences. Many people would associate themselves with present cases and characters shown through artistic formats; others, who do not feel a personal connection, would express more sympathy.

Third, according to the participant of the "Eve's Ribs" project, activism made through art draws more attention from media rather than academic discussions or seminars on the topic of gender equality. Since the Russian activists seek for the spread of equality agenda in the media and the public spaces, they choose those methods that would bring such attention from the media in order to reach population.

⁴⁷ "Ili metody, kotorymi my pol'zuemsia. Mne khotelos' skazat', chto oni bolee prodvinutye, no vriad li u nikh tam kakie-to problemy.. dazhe vot etot spektakl', v printsipe, temy odni i te zhe, no kak oni eto sdelali, i kak my, eto zhe vidno. [...] Oni sdelali stilizovannoe predstavlenie, kotoroe seichas uzhe v teatre ne populiarno."

⁴⁸ "Potomu chto my zanimaemsia..., a iskusstvo. Kogda ne mozhes' priamo vyskazat'sia: eto kasaetsia politicheskikh, otlichnogo ot politicheskogo videniia v bol'shinstve. Nu i sootvetstvenno.. Xotia by takim sposobom."

B: Performative practices, of course, are more vivid media drive than scientific work. It is very important for us: working with media, their way of presenting opinions.⁴⁹

Thus, creating art itself is not a goal; art is used mostly because it seems to be the most efficient tool for bringing the gender equality agenda to the public spaces in the existing political context in Russia.

C: All the others [participants] are amateurs who are very interested [in the project] because the goal of the whole project is not to create Art with a capital letter, but contrariwise, to work on these problems regardless fields of people's activities, to draw attention, and ideally, to help with joining to our theatrical group. [...]

Our experience now proves that even the process of holding regular master classes, meetings, discussions of this problem help very much. It also leads to creation of ideas of all kinds about what and how could be done in order to improve the situation.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ "perfomativnye praktiki, konechno, iavliautsia bolee iarkim mediapovodom, chem nauchnaia rabota. Rabota so SMI i tochka zreniia SMI, tochka zreniia tekhn, kto schitaet sebia SMI."

⁵⁰ "Vse ostal'nye – èto prosto liubiteli, kotorym ochen' interesno, potomu chto zadacha vsego proekta, festivalia – èto ne sozdavat' iskusstvo s bol'shoi bukvy, a naoborot rabotat' vne zavisimosti ot sfery deiatel'nosti liudei nad ètoï problematikoï, privlekat' vnimanie, i v ideale pomogat' k svoemu teatru prisoediniat'sia. Nash opyt zdes' dokazyvaet seichas, chto dazhe reguliarnoe provedenie master-klassov, vstrechi, obsuzhdeniia ètoï problemy ochen' sil'no pomagaiut. I porozhdaiutsia raznogo roda idei o tom, chto by možno bylo i kak sdelat', chtoby uluchshit' situatsiiu."

7. CONCLUSION

The research has examined the process of domestication of the Nordic policies and ideas on gender equality in the Russian context. First, talking about the case of collaboration between government officials, it has been seen that a few Nordic policies have been adopted in the St Petersburg realm. The practical work in relation to gender equality by St Petersburg's authorities has been mostly done in the spheres related to social and health spheres: introducing a gender perspective into the medical care and a health system, combating gender-based violence, providing social benefits for pregnant women and women with children. Moreover, there are different programmes for protection labour rights of women; however, they mostly apply to women with children and can be classified as those measures aimed at support of motherhood. Thus, the work is mostly done in the fields of social and economic rights; political issues have not been present into practical consideration. Thus, the importance of motherhood in the Russian gender order could be traced since the Soviet times (see e.g. Ashwin, 2000); building on the concept of 're-traditionalization' of gender relations in Russia (Salmenniemi and Adamson, 2015), it could be concluded that the women's rights are protected in relation to their maternal status. Moreover, there seems to be a presence of biological determinism, which has been hugely present since the Soviet times: putting so much efforts into supporting motherhood shows that the main activities in women's lives are somehow related to the fact of child-birth; in its turn, men continue to be absent in the discourse of family-related issues.

Furthermore, as to collaboration among feminist activists, much more solidarity on different issues could be seen at their agenda. They share transnational feminist discourse, underline structural patterns of inequality, and make importance of an intersectional approach in their activities. Moreover, it seems that most of the Nordic ideas on gender equality have been adopted by the Russian activists even before the process of collaboration; thus, the most vivid example of transferring new ideas could be intersectional approach towards gender and ethnicity (meaning, women with migrant background, who experience double discrimination).

While almost all the ideas on equality are shared among the Russian and Finnish activists, impossibility of domestication arises when it comes to the methods of activities and fighting for adopting favorable policies at the official level: since the Russian political and civil context is specific, holding classical street actions and negotiations with the government through these means are almost impossible. Therefore, the Russian activists make use of artistic tools in order to reach wider audience with their agenda: the method of art is much less present in the Nordic context.

Thus, the important conclusion about *local (regional)* domestication arises. Moreover, it is verified for both official and activist level. Even though St Petersburg has not adopted many policies, which

are underlined as being essential for gender equality by the Nordic countries (such as equality in decision making processes), at the official level, it is still recognized as one of the advanced federal subjects in Russia in this regard. Moreover, in Russia, which is quite big country with many different political, social, and cultural contexts within the country, the federal domestication of gender equality policies seems to be impossible at this stage. The same regional approach is applicable to the activist level, but in slightly different terms. The activists underline the importance of paying attention towards their own local peculiarities. Thus, sharing the same approaches and ideas of eliminating violence against women, intersectional approach towards inequality, advocating for women's higher representation in decision-making policies, they underline that they should attention to those problems existing in their local communities.

Additionally, it seems that both processes of learning take place voluntarily; the St Petersburg's authorities do not have that strong interconnections with the Nordic countries in order to call such transfer process as coercive. This conclusion might be also backed by the fact that in today's Russia much work of promoting gender equality is conducted on a voluntary basis (meaning, without any substantial financial support from the government); it applies both for governmental and activist levels. Moreover, as it has been shown above, the Nordic and Russian authorities often understand the whole issue of gender equality differently: the Russians concentrate mostly on the private sphere and motherhood. As for the activists, it is even more evident that all the ideas are adopted absolutely voluntarily.

Moreover, it appears that the Russian activists are more keen on doing their feminist activist work than their Finnish partners: the Russian in the "Eve's Ribs" project play more dynamic role. The reason because of different political contexts: while in the Nordic countries gender equality is declared at the state level as one of the main values, the Finnish activists might feel less necessity to do this work. Whereas in Russia, where some federal policies could be characterized as anti-feminist, many new groups advocating for gender equality occur as resistance.

It leads to another conclusion: at the governmental level, the Nordic countries present themselves as experts on gender equality, put more efforts in order to translate gender equality ideas to the Russian context. Thus, the cooperation at the official level could be characterized by the border thinking implying some kind of imperialistic way of conducting international relations: the officials of the Nordic countries see the process of promoting their achievements in gender equality to other contexts, including Russia, as their mission.

Meanwhile, the issue of expertise does not arise much at the activist level: they consider to be equal, maintaining equally valuable experiences. They build their cooperation in the basis of

dialogue, which correlates with the ideas of transnational feminism with lower level of power relations and subordination among involved actors of the learning process.

As for further analysis between two levels of domestication, it has been seen that the problem of gender-based violence is considered to be crucial in the Russian context; this field of collaboration also pointed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. Apart from this, there are few ideas in common between the activist and governmental level. The activists do not share the idea about biological designation for genders and support the idea of gender equality in the private sphere (for example, in families), whereas the authorities dedicate the great part of their work to support motherhood.

Apart from adaption, domestication might be characterized by the rejection of some ideas. According to the analysis, this is not the case at the activist level: their activities and collaboration fall into the practices of transnational feminist work, which represents stronger solidarity and a common agenda across contexts. As for the official level, women's representation in the public sphere is absent from the official discourse and actual policies; at the same time, public representation is one of the main tools for promoting gender equality in the Nordic countries.

Thus, this study has revealed some efficient findings in the field of domestication of Nordic gender equality agenda into the Russian context. However, there could be made some implications for the future research. First, since one of the main conclusion is the fact of regional domestication, it would be efficient to broaden the scale of representative Russian federal subjects in order to analyze how such regional domestication would take place. Moreover, the activities performed by independent feminists and members of women's organizations are aimed at the massive audience and general public opinion; therefore, it remains as an open issue how such activities influence the processes of policy transfer in modern Russia, which is characterized by the strong power of the state and the official rhetoric on traditional gender norms.

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APPENDIX 1: List of interviewees

Approached directly for the research

Appointed Letter	Region of residence	Status at the “Eve’s Ribs” project
A	Samara, Russia	Participant
B	St Petersburg, Russia	Organizer/Participant
C	Finland	Organizer/Participant
D	St Petersburg, Russia	Organizer/Participant
E	Finland	Organizer
F	Samara, Russia	Participant

Appeared in the secondary data (interviews published in media)

Appointed Letter	Region of residence	Project	Status
G	Finland	“Eve’s Ribs”	Participant
H	St Petersburg, Russia (migrant background)	“Gul”	Organizer